

The Fratricides

BY

MAURICE EDELMAN



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To
Sonia

HISTORICAL NOTE

The Moslem rebellion against French rule in Algeria ended with the Evian Agreement in 1962 which established the Algerian State. The clash between the FLN or National Liberation Front and the French Army was complicated in the last stages of the struggle by the OAS, the Secret Army Organization, an underground body of French civilians and dissident soldiers, pledged to keep Algeria French. In order to suppress the OAS, the French Government employed undercover agents in Algeria known as barbouzes or 'false beards'. They were dedicated Gaullists who earned the implacable enmity of the OAS.

CHAPTER I

'THE news from Blida——'

'I knew it when it was a very small town,' said Madame Rollin. 'The trains went straight through it to the south. But the road nowadays——'

'It's the last of the French towns,' said her host Dr. Hassid. 'The Avenue Maginot is just like'—he groped for a comparison and failed, and Captain Peyron picked up *La Dépêche d'Algérie* from the marquetry table and said,

'I've always thought it sinister, naming our streets after politicians and generals.'

'They almost always become an insult to somebody,' said Eliane de Croissillon. 'But the Rue Michelet is neutral.'

'Michelet,' said Dr. Hassid, 'was a sentimental republican who loved old monarchs. You can live in the Rue Michelet without any qualms.'

'What I remember most about Michelet,' said Eliane, 'is the part about St. Louis where the king is praying for the "gift of tears". I never knew why.'

'Come away from the window, Eliane,' said Dr. Hassid.

She smiled indulgently to her father, and turned to Peyron.

'Do you like being back in the city?'

He shrugged his shoulders, and the afternoon sunlight fell in slats on his pale face which looked as if, dried by many fevers and suns, it could no longer sweat.

'It brings me back to my friends,' he said, and took her hand and made a brief gesture of kissing it.

'When I was a little girl——' Eliane began.

'A very beautiful little girl,' said Peyron, 'with dark hair.'

‘Don’t interrupt me,’ said Eliane. ‘I remember you used to visit us and play bridge with Papa.’

‘I hope to do so many times again,’ said Peyron, ‘although I’m the oldest captain in the army.’

‘It’s Wednesdays,’ said Eliane, ‘you remember.’

‘Wednesdays bridge—Sundays music. I like to think that nothing has changed.’ Then he added ironically, ‘Nothing has changed—only the events that bring us here.’

‘Yes, the events,’ said Dr. Hassid, joining them. ‘Wherever there are Frenchmen, there are always events. And then we have super-events—rather like super-prefects. I’ve often wondered what would happen if instead of reading about a new murder in Ben Aknoun we suddenly read that a European and a Moslem had been infected with bubonic plague. Would that be an event or a super-event?’

‘It was horrifying in 1944,’ said Madame Rollin. Her old eyes wrinkled in horror at the recollection. ‘I loathe rats, anyhow. The thought of those ghastly rats in Oran acting as hosts to fleas—I couldn’t look at cats after that. Not for years.’

‘They destroyed the rats,’ said Peyron.

‘It’s an argument in favour of violence,’ said de Croissillon, taking up the newspaper. ‘My wife doesn’t agree.’

‘No, I don’t,’ said Eliane. ‘A plague is somehow arbitrary—the bacillus isn’t a rational organism. Isn’t that so, Daddy?’

Dr. Hassid spread his large hands, and laughed.

‘Are we rational?’ he asked.

De Croissillon opened his newspaper and studied it for a few moments. ‘Did you know Bardet well?’ he asked Hassid.

‘Bardet—the surgeon? I know him very well,’ said Hassid.

‘You knew him well,’ said de Croissillon bluntly. ‘They shot him last night—he died in the Barbier-Hugo.’

Dr. Hassid took up the paper and walked towards the door.

‘It’s endless,’ he said as if to himself. ‘It doesn’t stop.’

‘Who was that pretty girl I saw you with at the gala?’

Madame Rollin asked Peyron. She had turned the conversation from the murdered man with a superstitious distaste.

'She's the daughter of Bérard of Sahara Oil. They've got a suite at the Aletti. We meet in the bar from time to time.'

'I know Bérard well,' said de Croissillon. 'He's on the Board with me.'

'I always forget you're an oil man,' said Peyron.

'I chiefly prospect for oil in Paris,' said de Croissillon. 'When we left Algiers ten years ago, I only had a geographical survey—and Eliane. Now, the geographical survey is a gusher at Reggane with nothing between us but a thousand miles of sand and the FLN.'

Peyron raised an eyebrow.

'The army——'

'The army, I think, is withdrawing,' said de Croissillon.

'I don't think so.'

'It's the policy.'

'That may be.'

'It will be the Congo all over again,' said Madame Rollin.

'We will be Katanga,' said Si Cada, wiping his forehead. 'We are too committed.'

'It isn't racialism,' said Madame Rollin, smiling to Cada, with whom she had played bridge intermittently for fifteen years.

'We could be friendly without their help,' said the Moslem doctor, acknowledging her condescension with a bow.

'The Congo all over again,' she repeated. 'When the army withdraws——'

'But we've just arrived,' said Peyron. 'We just arrived. I'll tell you a military secret, Madame. We are on the perimeter of the city. All that we're waiting for are orders.'

'What orders? Who's giving them?'

'That,' said Peyron, 'is a military secret, which I could only disclose in restricted circumstances.'

'Ah,' said Madame Rollin coquettishly, 'I'm not too old to

take advantage of your offer . . . I'm amazed how life goes on in the city. I walked here today. And there were all the girls in their summer dresses, and the *yaouleds* and the flower-stalls—cafés, music—everything going on just as I've always known it."

'In London during the war,' said Peyron, and the other guests turned to listen, 'the bombs fell and burnt houses and destroyed men and women. And then next day, you'd see queues of people waiting for buses and going to work. I was in Carlton Gardens then, and I realized it was easier to do what you'd been doing the day before than to invent something new.'

'You can stand,' said de Croissillon, 'or you can run. You can't do both at the same time.'

'I don't fancy being a refugee,' said Madame Rollin. 'Even if they'd let us. I'm not brave staying here. Just lazy.'

'We're used to a comfortable life,' said Si Cada. 'Perhaps that's our tragedy.'

'It's certainly the tragedy of us Europeans,' said Madame Rollin. She leaned over to Peyron, and said in a loud whisper, 'All they think of is raping Frenchwomen. It's disgusting!'

'The Quintet,' Hassid announced. 'Mozart's Quintet in A major.'

Peyron offered Eliane a chair, but she said that she preferred to stand. Peyron sat on a high-backed chair, Madame Rollin, de Croissillon and Dr. Hassid on the three brocaded armchairs, and the other guests on the rug-covered sofa near the gramophone.

The windows muttered gently, and Dr. Hassid said below the clarinet's arpeggio, 'Move away, Eliane.' His daughter half-smiled, with her finger to her lips, and leaned against the wall, still holding the knot of the silk tassels. The whisky and orange juice on the tray trembled, and Francesca, the elderly maid, put her hand on the carafe to silence the duet of the glasses with the violins. None of the guests stirred. It was a matter of

pride. The traffic, four storeys below, moved down the Rue Michelet in a steady swish broken only by the gear change of the vehicles climbing up to El Biar. A siren began to sound, counterpointed till the end of the movement by the larghetto with muted strings.

'Rue d'Isly,' said de Croissillon, stretching his legs and looking towards his wife. 'I've developed a very sensitive ear since we've been back in Algiers.'

Eliane pushed the shutters, and the room filled with a sudden light.

'Don't stand near the balcony,' Hassid repeated from his armchair. His instruction was only a hope. Eliane walked on to the balcony and looked towards the port.

'Yesterday,' said Hassid to de Croissillon, 'one of my colleagues spent the whole morning taking glass out of a child's face.'

'They're barbarians,' said Madame Rollin. 'I've lived here for forty years——' Her voice faded.

'I think it's near the Palais d'Été,' said Eliane, returning. 'You can see the smoke.'

The music ended, and from the hidden stereophones came the magnified click of the brake.

'I never sit near a window nowadays,' said Madame Rollin in her deep voice. 'It's a favourite dodge of theirs, you know. They just stick the stuff on the window-sill.'

'Let's hear the minuet,' said Dr. Hassid, heaving his body comfortably in his armchair. 'At my age, all I want is a little music and a quiet walk to the University.'

Eliane walked across the wide room and turned the record. Then she sat at de Croissillon's feet with her arm resting on his knee next to the table. Cada, Dr. and Madame Gaillard, Peyron, Walter—her father's musical evenings were involved in all her memories. The faces, the macaroons, the sounds of the Rue Michelet, the interval for drinks. Her father was still there in his armchair, wearing his heavy glasses, his flushed

cheeks like dewlaps, his voice authoritative and kind. But old. The hair over his forehead was white and wispy. And she thought of him, dark-haired and vital, walking through the hospital with a procession of timid staff behind him. Despite ten years of absence with her husband in Paris, she felt that the city was as it had always been, apart from the new buildings in the suburbs and the boarded-up windows where once there had been plate-glass. The flat too was the same, cavernous and ageless with its heavy furniture and medical books and the lilies and the roses still waiting pell-mell, as once they had waited to be arranged by the fragile hands of her mother whom she hardly remembered. But her principal recollections were all of her father, and she watched him with his face relaxed, his eyes closed like those of a dead man, his wrists dangling. Her husband was stretching his powerful legs, and yawning his way through the music, while from time to time he surreptitiously eyed his wrist-watch.

From the door the maid beckoned secretively. Eliane averted her head, but Francesca leaned forward with the familiarity of her long service, and hissed above the music, 'Eliane—there's someone outside.' Hassid looked up angrily, and his daughter moved quickly across the room to end the interruption.

'There's someone outside,' Francesca repeated.

'Who is it?' Eliane asked.

The old servant said with an air of complicity, 'You'll know him when you see him,' and Eliane followed her into the vestibule.

A man of about thirty-seven, wearing a fawn, lightweight suit, was looking out of the window on to the Rue Michelet. His short-cropped hair, the relaxed set of his shoulders and his hands placed firmly on the sill to balance his body as he leaned forward gave him the air of a soldier in civilian clothes or an athlete at ease. Hearing the footsteps behind him, he turned, and stood for a second to attention in front of Eliane before making a quick bow. She stared at him and he was about to

speaking, but Eliane interrupted with his name, an exclamation of delight.

'Robert!'

She stretched out her hand, and he raised it briefly to his lips.

'Robert!' she said. 'I'm so pleased—it's like—it's all right, Francesca—I'll show M. du Pré—'

'Let me stand here for a moment,' said du Pré. 'Let me look at you.'

'What are you doing in Algiers?' Eliane asked. 'Everyone's leaving, and you're arriving.'

'It's such a long time since I was here,' said du Pré, and he inhaled the stuffy air of the entrance hall with its smell of old carpets, undusted books and decaying prints of desert scenes and views of the Aurès mountains. 'It's all here. It's strange. It's nearly eighteen years . . . The Hassid flat was our rest-camp—our private Sidi-Ferruch.'

Eliane smiled at his description and remembered the throng of Allied officers who used to frequent the Hassid home in the years before her marriage.

'I was very jealous of that American colonel,' he said. 'What was his name?'

'Tom Galloway,' she said promptly.

'Yes—that's it, Galloway. What happened to him?'

'Oh, he went back—and like all of you, he said he'd write, and sent a few letters, then a few Christmas cards—and then I suppose he got caught up with his Rotary Club or whatever they have in Des Moines.'

'He was very devoted to you.'

Eliane shrugged her shoulders. 'Soldiers away from home—they get devoted very easily. Besides, I was only sixteen and very well brought up.'

She walked to the window and looked over the rooftops towards the port.

'But it was sad when they went away. I used to see the troop

transports from here. The hospital ships made me saddest of all. Gradually, you all went away.'

Their conversation hesitated as between two acquaintances who after a long separation quickly exhaust their common memories, and looking at each other again realize that they have no further fund of experience to draw on.

'And Dr. Hassid?'

'Oh, Daddy's fine,' she said, taking his arm and leading him towards the drawing-room.

'The children?'

'Two—they're in Paris.'

'Mine too.'

'I didn't think Algiers the right place for them.'

'No—not for the time being.'

Their conversation halted again and they contemplated each other with a slight confusion in finding that they were no longer exactly the same people who had known each other eighteen years before. At the door, Eliane disengaged her arm and said,

'You haven't changed—not much. You still look like that young lieutenant scowling in the corner.'

'I was scowling at Galloway,' said du Pré. 'But I was obviously scowling at the wrong man. I should have been scowling at de Croissillon. The trouble was, I liked him.'

Eliane laughed with him, and said,

'He liked you too. We got married soon after the war, and went to live in Oran . . . I think we can go in now. I always know when the Quintet's nearly over. There's a scratchy bit on the record. But you haven't told me what you're doing in North Africa.'

'I'm a civil servant,' said du Pré. 'They've asked me to come over here for a few weeks to write a report on the state of our museums in Algeria.'

'Good heavens!' said Eliane. 'I never thought you'd become a civil servant.'

'Why not?' said du Pré. 'There are worse disasters than working for the Minister of Culture.'

'Well,' said Eliane, 'I know one person who'll agree.'

'Who?'

'Daddy!'

The music had stopped, and she flung open the door with a ceremonial gesture.

'Lieutenant du Pré has returned——'

'—coffee-maker, cake-swallower, bridge-dummy and general dogsbody to the Hassid family,' du Pré ended her sentence.

Hassid rose, stumbled over the carpet, and embraced him warmly. De Croissillon shook his hand and patted him on the shoulder. Madame Rollin peered at him, and said,

'Yes, I remember you well. You were the shy lieutenant. Yes, I remember—you once brought Eliane flowers from your commanding officer, and she thought they were from you.'

'Actually,' said du Pré, 'it was a happy misunderstanding. The flowers were from an American called Galloway. I met his messenger on the stairs, and delivered the flowers to Millé Hassid. For a whole day, I enjoyed the rewards of the Colonel's gallantry.'

'You hear that, de Croissillon?' said Madame Rollin. 'What were the rewards?'

'Listening to the doctor talking about music, medicine and Arabic history.'

Everyone smiled, and Dr. Hassid, flattered, said,

'Eliane, why don't you offer Robert some macaroons and a whisky and soda?'

Eliane beckoned to Francesca, but du Pré rose with his quick step and took a glass for himself.

'Then I will give you the Bartók Symphony,' said Dr. Hassid.

He started the gramophone, but after a few bars a second and nearer explosion made the room quiver, and the needle slid screaming across the record before entering a steady groove.

'We'd better start again,' said Hassid.

Eliane scooped up the rose-petals which had fallen and said, 'Don't move, Father. I'll do it.'

Peyron raised his glass to du Pré, and said,

'Welcome to Algiers. You see we're greeting you with a six-bomb salute. It's almost presidential.'

Du Pré said, 'It's a favourite city of mine. I love it.'

'We all do,' said Madame Rollin. 'That's the trouble.'

'Well, now that you're here, I hope you'll come to see us often,' said Dr. Hassid.

'Yes, often,' said du Pré. 'But no more Wednesday bridge. I'm working civil service hours.'

'Rocher Noir?' asked de Croissillon in his sharp, imperative voice.

'No—I'm attached to the Gouvernement Général with a roving commission from the Ministry. I wouldn't like to be shunted into a fortress and have to travel twenty miles in an armoured train to get there.'

'Where are you staying?' Eliane asked, fiddling with the unfamiliar switches of the gramophone.

'They've stuck me in the Hôtel de l'Angleterre—a rather dismal little place near the port. But I can get to the office in ten minutes.'

The conversation moved away from Eliane to her husband, who had begun to talk to Madame Rollin about de Gaulle.

'The most significant thing about de Gaulle,' he said, 'is the paradox of his character. He taught the army disobedience. Once in 1940—then he repeated the lesson in 1958.'

'It's his strength,' said Cada. 'He unified the nation when it was fragmented—the paradox you're talking about saved us from civil war.'

'There's always civil war in France,' said Dr. Hassid. 'It's a disease with phases of latency. We've been the victims of a schizophrenia since 1789.'

'Well, what's the common denominator that makes us all patriots?' asked Peyron.

'Self-interest,' de Croissillon said quickly. 'We are a state with geographical frontiers and a collective self-interest. When it's attacked, we rally in the name of the Fatherland. That's why here, in North Africa, French Algeria means patriotism. It's the majority self-interest. There'—with a wave to Metropolitan France—'our Algerian interest is a minority self-interest. That's why you can have patriotic meetings in the Mutualité in aid of the FLN . . .'

Eliane protested, 'You're oversimplifying, Walter—as usual.' De Croissillon turned to Peyron.

'Don't you agree?'

'Patriotism,' said Peyron, 'is like poetry. You destroy it once you define it.'

'The mood—yes,' said du Pré, 'but the aims of patriotism have to be rational. Patriotism has its prose as well as its poetry.'

'What is its prose?' de Croissillon asked.

'Politics!' said du Pré.

'Politics—disgusting,' said Madame Rollin.

'What's the alternative?' asked du Pré, and his glance met Eliane's and they smiled to each other.

'Authority,' said de Croissillon.

'Let's hear the first movement,' Dr. Hassid interrupted. He picked up the gramophone record from the turntable, wiped it and put it respectfully back.

'That is how it should be done,' he said to Eliane.

'Yes, Father,' she answered.

Looking around for silence, like a conductor, Dr. Hassid pressed the starter-switch and returned to his armchair, where he listened with his eyes half-opened now, observing his guests and hospitably returning their smiles.

An hour later, at half-past five when the sun was still high and the crowds sauntered uphill and downhill under the trees at a Sunday pace, de Croissillon, Eliane, du Pré and Peyron strolled on the shadowed side of the Rue Michelet towards the Emperor Bar. Near the kerb, the Arab flower-sellers seemed all to have chosen mimosa for their display, and Peyron said, 'There won't be any trouble today.'

'Why?' du Pré asked, catching up with the others after standing aside to let two Moslem women in white *haïks* pass by.

'You can always tell,' said Peyron. 'When there's going to be trouble, they never bring their fragile stuff with them.'

Du Pré looked at the slow surge of the crowded street—the women in light dresses mingling with men in uniform or tropical suits or shirt-sleeves, the children walking hand-in-hand with their parents—and said,

'It's like Lyons in early summer, although it's March.'

'Algiers is two months ahead of France,' said Eliane. 'It's a strange place. There's a sort of Algerian fever that people get when they come here. They arrive perfectly normal, and in a few weeks they're killing each other or falling in love or committing suicide.'

'They look very calm today,' said Peyron. 'They're always calm when things are going badly in Paris. It's like the Stock Exchange that rises when the Government falls.'

'Any more news of the peace talks?' said de Croissillon.

'Nothing,' said Peyron. 'Except that de Gaulle is resisting inch by inch.'

'The FLN——?' Eliane asked.

'No,' said de Croissillon, intervening quickly. 'The French!'

They had reached the Emperor Bar, and Eliane said,

'Let's sit outside.'

De Croissillon hesitated, but du Pré said,

'Why not? Peyron says it's going to be a quiet day.'

De Croissillon drew up one of the wicker chairs for Eliane. Then he changed his mind, and said,

'No, have this one facing the street.' He made himself comfortable on his chair, and said to Peyron, 'I never can understand how Si Cada manages to go on seeing my father-in-law.' 'Si Cada,' said Peyron, 'is a sacred cow. Because he's a brilliant surgeon at the Mustapha and took a bullet from Ben Kiffa's head, the FLN look after him. Because he took a bullet from Colonel Verdier's belly, the OAS tolerates him. In between all that, he can visit Dr. Hassid as a token of Franco-Moslem solidarity.'

'I hate Beni-Oui-Oui's,' said de Croissillon.

Eliane said,

'You hate them if they say "Yes", and hate them if they say "No" . . . They can't win. Do order some drinks, Walter. I'm dying of thirst. I once knew an ethnologist at the University who told me that when he went into the desert, he'd drink water straight from camel pools.'

'The sun sterilizes the water and neutralizes the dung,' said Peyron. He looked across the table, still littered with green glasses and discarded olive stones in cigarette-trays, and said,

'It's strange, Eliane. I sometimes think that you and your friends—I don't mean your ethnologist—I mean the ones in Paris who write manifestoes about peace—the intellectuals—they don't know how it is in the *djebels*. There's no running water there, you know. Our lads shiver at night and burn in the day—and starve and go thirsty—so that here in Algiers, you and I and Si Cada can get water from a tap.'

His face had become pale, and his eyes fixed themselves on a Moslem who walked hurriedly past with his head lowered.

'We've been fighting for seven years,' he said to du Pré.

'Isn't it time for peace?' Eliane asked.

Peyron relaxed and smiled.

'Yes—peace would be exciting. Peace and my pension—how'd you like that as my war aims?'

'It's splendid,' said de Croissillon, distributing the drinks he had ordered. 'Here's to peace and pensions!' he began, but the

end of his toast was fractured by the sound of the half-tracks and jeeps rolling fast towards the port, involved in the general commotion of Dauphine cars, old Citroën taxis with Arab drivers, and an occasional Mercedes or a Jaguar swishing past with a special arrogance befitting their passengers, young men and women who glanced indifferently at the pavements and café tables as if they were empty of people. Everything seemed to hurry. But at the intersection of the Square Crémieux and the Rue du Port the traffic policeman halted and waved on the vehicles like a conductor restraining and summoning the elements of his orchestra.

As the zebra crossings filled, the traffic paused respectfully.

'You see how law-abiding we are in Algiers,' said Eliane.

'We're a civilized people,' said Peyron. 'We're developed.'

They all laughed at the word 'developed'. 'The Arabs aren't yet developed.' It was the word to end all arguments.

'Oh, I didn't tell you,' said Eliane across the table to her husband. 'Vedoni rang.'

De Croissillon frowned, and said, 'What time?'

'About three—he said it wasn't important.'

De Croissillon was about to make an angry comment, but instead he turned to Peyron and said,

'Have you transport?'

'Yes,' said Peyron. 'I've a car and driver up at the post office. I'm leaving in a few minutes.'

'I think,' said du Pré, 'I'd better be getting along too.'

'Oh, no,' de Croissillon replied, smiling, 'I've got to go up to El Biar. Will you see Eliane safely back?'

'Of course,' said du Pré, rising and shaking hands with the two men. De Croissillon kissed Eliane affectionately on the cheek, paid the bill and strode off with Peyron, both walking in step.

After they had gone, du Pré and Eliane sat for a few moments without talking, like wrestlers groping for a contact.

'The curious part of life here,' said du Pré at last, 'is that it

seems to go on at two levels—the part you see and the invisible part.’

Eliane raised her eyebrows ironically, and said,
‘That’s very observant of you.’

Du Pré smiled, and said,

‘I don’t mean it quite as naïvely as that. What I’m trying to say is that in Algiers everyone maintains a convention—in public at any rate—that the invisible level isn’t there at all.’

‘But the Secret Army is everywhere here—and the FLN there.’ She pointed to an OAS scrawl in pitch on the pavement, and then waved towards the Casbah. ‘The invisible level isn’t really invisible. It shows itself in symptoms—as Daddy says. They’re pretty malignant.’

‘And yet people are getting married and having children and falling in love and attending family funerals.’ Du Pré opened the newspapers he had brought and turned to the classified advertisements. ‘Look,’ he said, ‘they still want typists, good speeds. The Gouvernement Général is still advertising the sale of surplus. They’re still playing Chopin at the Salle Laborde. There are still vacancies for agricultural salesmen in the Mitidja.’

‘Yes,’ said Eliane, taking the Amer Picon which du Pré had ordered for her. ‘But I’ve got the feeling it can’t go on for very long. It isn’t just the city that’s dying—the little bits falling away—the post breaking down because postmen are killed, or trains stopping because they shoot at the drivers. It isn’t just the city dying. It’s a whole civilization that’s dying. What would Victor Hugo have said of all this?’

‘He’d be in exile writing an ode in Guernsey.’

‘That’s exactly what I mean,’ said Eliane. ‘Once upon a time France was the conscience of civilization. It had spokesmen who were ready to protest. All that we’ve got now are tame Academicians hanging on to their sashes, and a few left-wing eccentrics.’

‘Oh, no,’ du Pré protested. ‘It isn’t as bad as that.’

'I think it's worse,' Eliane said fiercely. 'Frenchmen used to take personal responsibility for their governments. Today, the majority don't give a damn as long as they can have steaks, motor-cars and long summer holidays.'

'That doesn't seem a bad programme,' said du Pré.

'Not till you work out who pays for it,' said Eliane. She turned her head as a stir of curiosity passed through the drinkers at the tables. The traffic slowed down, and from the overloaded trams heads turned in a slow half-circle towards the Impasse Bougeaud. The flower-seller had hurriedly begun to assemble the pots of greenery on his stall, and the shutters of the flats above the shops started clacking in an accelerating rhythm, quickening the upstir from the tables.

'What's going on?' du Pré asked a Moslem waiter.

'I don't know,' he replied, trying to find change for three customers who were demanding it simultaneously. 'In a moment, sir . . . I don't know . . . something's always going on.'

'I think I'd better take you home,' said du Pré, peering through the knots of people who were staring towards the Impasse.

'No,' said Eliane, rising. 'I didn't hear anything.'

'Did you hear anything?' du Pré asked the waiter, who was following with a sullen expression the drift from his tables.

'Nothing, thank God,' said the waiter. 'It's better not to hear anything.'

'Let's go and look,' said Eliane.

They faced each other for a moment, and she looked at him through her dark and serious eyes.

'You ought to wear a pony-tail,' said du Pré, 'and socks, and chase fire-engines with the boys.'

'I want to see and know everything,' said Eliane, and as they walked she took his arm.

After the day's heat, a light breeze was blowing from the

sea, mingling a marine air with the orangy smells from the hills. Above the tall white offices and flats, broken by the tumble of Moorish houses glittering in the sun, the evening sky was still a deep blue. The policeman directing the traffic had disappeared, and only the army vehicles hissed past them at their former speed. A few civilian cars had pulled up at the roadside, but otherwise the street seemed to have emptied itself. There was a Feast Day air in the neighbourhood, with people approaching and leaving the cul-de-sac like communicants after their devotions. Their faces were earnest and absorbed. The men spoke quietly together, and the women, as if attending a ritual which was both solemn and barely understood, moved modestly, accompanied by the insistent bells from the Cathedral.

At the entrance to the Impasse, a crowd of several hundred was standing silently, looking upwards towards the balconies of the tenements thronged on each storey with families joining them in their contemplation. Du Pré took Eliane's arm from his, and held hers as they raised their eyes like members of a congregation towards a priest.

Between the stanchions on the third storey of the tenement buildings facing each other across the passageway, two ropes had been strung high above the crowd's heads.

'What's that, Mama?' a child called out, and there was a nervous laugh from those around.

Sagging from a loop between the ropes hung the pallid body of a dead man, completely naked except for a false beard grotesquely stuffed around the chin. Dangling like a puppet, it moved in the wind first towards the Square, then towards the sea. When it faced the Square, the bloodstained head, half-obliterated by wounds, reflected vermilion lights from the sun. The buttocks turned slowly like those of a mannequin in a fashion-show.

From one of the ropes, a placard fluttered.

'He killed,' it said, *'but the Secret Army was watching.'*

Du Pré looked towards Eliane's white impassive profile and slid his hand down to hers. It was moist, and he said,

'Let's go back.'

'No,' she said, and her hand closed around his. 'I mustn't run away.'

Next to her a man in shirt-sleeves looked up calmly at the dangling corpse.

'He was a *barbouze*,' he said in a polite conversational tone to Eliane.

'All the same . . .' said a woman at his elbow.

'All the same what?' the man asked truculently, raising his voice.

The woman said to the small boy whose hand she was holding,

'Come on, pet. We've got to go.'

But the child, sucking a frozen ice on a stick, stared at the body and in a sudden discovery said,

'Mama, it's a man! It's a man!'

Eliane turned away, and du Pré still held her arm.

'It's horrible,' she said, 'horrible.'

As they went, they could hear the mother dragging the child along. 'It's a man,' the child was crying, 'I want to look.' Its wails were mingled with the gathering clamour of the fire-engine which had been summoned so that, after an adequate elevation, the corpse could be lowered.

CHAPTER II

THE two old men sat bowed over the board, studying the hand-carved ivory chessmen which Cada had presented to Hassid on the occasion of Eliane's marriage. After the music, the chess. It was a tradition which had only been briefly interrupted during the war when Cada had served as a surgeon in a field hospital attached to the 47th Tirailleurs. Nowadays, they met regularly in the course of their duties at the Mustapha Hospital but their only social communication was on Hassid's 'Sundays'. Cada, always the first to arrive, would take a seat on the edge of the sofa, barely speaking until the other guests had gone. Only then did he relax and smile and talk to his friend David Hassid, with whom he had been a student at the Faculty of Medicine in Algiers University. Lately, he had discarded the rosette of the Légion d'Honneur and the ribbon of the Croix de Guerre from his buttonhole. When Hassid teased him about his prudence, he replied, 'I think it better for us if I don't wear it.' And Hassid had stopped his banter.

'It's your move, I think,' said Hassid after a long pause.

Cada pushed his chair away from the board, and said,

'We'd better call it a draw tonight.'

Hassid grunted, and said,

'Will you have some more orange-juice?'

'No,' said Cada, and he went across to Hassid and put his thin, pale hand on his shoulder. 'I think, Dr. Hassid, I won't come here any more on Sundays.'

They always addressed each other in private with the formality they used in public.

Hassid carefully put the chess pieces back in their box, and for a moment he didn't answer.

'Why not?' he asked at last.

'Si Cada handed him a queen from the board.

'Have you had any trouble?' Hassid asked.

'No,' said Cada slowly. 'I want to avoid it. I don't want you and Eliane to have difficulties.'

'Why should we have difficulties?'

Hassid stood and put his bulky arm around Cada's narrow shoulders.

'Why should we have difficulties?' he repeated. 'We're old friends—colleagues.'

Cada lowered his heavy eyelids and said,

'It's what they're afraid of. They have an interest in keeping us—all of us—apart. They talk of fraternization—but they prefer subjugation. The only thing they're afraid of is peace.'

Cada looked up at Hassid, and their eyes met briefly.

'Yesterday morning,' said Cada, 'I opened my locker before my lecture to the third-year students. On top was a sheet of paper. Someone had written in Arabic, "Si Cada—wait!"'

* Hassid frowned, and said,

'Who was it?'

'I don't know,' said Cada. 'It doesn't matter. It's all anonymous—the letter—the bullet that hits you in the back of the neck.'

'I'm very sorry,' said Hassid. 'Very sorry.' Then he added comfortingly, 'But it doesn't mean anything. Everyone gets threats at some time or other.'

'My life is with God,' Cada said. 'I am concerned for my friends. I won't come here after today.'

He folded the chessboard and held it in his hands, contemplating the years of their friendship, the Sundays recurring like festivals in the calendar of his life.

£ 'I will be sorry,' he said, and he glanced around the room now shadowed by the oncoming dusk. It was too early for the lamps to be lit. The street noises had diminished like the light, with the harsh sounds of the day's traffic turned to a

crepuscular murmur, as the cinemas discharged their audiences into the Rue Michelet and the civilian cars disappeared at the approach of the curfew.

'I must go,' said Cada. 'We're like animals who cringe when night falls and take to their holes.'

Hassid raised himself from his chair, and said,

'I don't want you to exile yourself from our house—not for our sake. You are always welcome to come here. We will always be happy to see you.'

He took Cada's arm and led him onto the balcony. The white city of Algiers had turned to a dove-grey, overhung by the deep blue of the night sky which had suddenly asserted itself. Neon signs pricked crimson patterns on the terraces of the city. From the port, a large vessel, lit like a hotel in a park, moved seawards millimetre by millimetre against the sea's blackness.

'I've seen this view for many years,' said Hassid. 'I've seen armies come and go. Giraud sent me in chains to a concentration camp in the Sahara because I opposed Darlan—imagine that, because I opposed Darlan! I'm sixty-seven now. At my age I'm not going to change either for the FLN or the OAS.'

Cada glanced quickly over his shoulder at Francesca, who had appeared at the window leading to the balcony.

'There's someone on the telephone—they're asking for Dr. Cada,' she said, rolling her *r*'s as she had always done since her girlhood in Sardinia, which she had left over fifty years ago.

'For me?' Cada asked. 'Who wants me?'

'I don't know,' said Francesca, 'you'd better ask them.'

'She means no harm,' said Hassid, guiding Cada into the drawing-room. 'She means it literally.'

He returned to the balcony, and began to smoke his pipe while he waited for Cada, who was speaking in short Arabic sentences, to finish his conversation.

'Will he be staying for supper?' Francesca asked Hassid with a truculent malice.

'Dr. Cada,' he replied, 'always leaves before the curfew—as you know.' Then he looked at her face, which he had observed in all its phases during the years since his wife died, when Francesca had cared for Eliane, for Roger, his son who had been killed in the war, and later for himself in the loneliness of his large flat, and he asked her more gently,

'What have you got against Dr. Cada?'

'Nothing,' she said. 'Will you have the cold chicken?'

'Yes. What have you got against him?'

Francesca brushed back a grey lock of hair from her forehead, and said,

'I don't trust him.'

'Why not?'

'I don't trust any of them.'

'Is that the only reason?'

'Isn't that enough? . . . Are you sure you want cold chicken, Doctor?'

'Yes, cold chicken,' said Hassid. 'Cold chicken.'

He heard the telephone receiver go down, and he returned to the drawing-room where Francesca had lit the lamp on the grand piano. Cada was standing in the shadows with his hand still on the instrument where he had replaced it, his shoulders burdened with thought. When he caught sight of Hassid, he ~~straightened~~ straightened himself abruptly as if he was urging himself to a decision.

'I must go to the Rue Rovigo,' he said in Arabic.

Spontaneously, Hassid replied in Arabic,

'Is it essential?'

Cada answered, 'It is essential—there are women and a child as well—'

Hassid said, 'Telephone the Mustapha. Let them send an ambulance.'

Cada slowly revolved the globe on the table, as if his mind was distracted by geography.

'It's impossible,' he said at last. Then he stopped speaking

Arabic and said, 'Impossible. They wouldn't reach the hospital alive. I'm going there myself.'

'In your car?'

'They're sending a taxi for me.'

Hassid shrugged his shoulders, and said,

'They'll respect an ambulance.'

'Yesterday,' said Cada, 'a Moslem was shot in the Rue des Moulins. He dragged himself bleeding into a police station. The OAS man followed him in, and finished him off on the floor of the station in front of the police, and got away. I don't think they'll respect an ambulance. There are five people wounded by a grenade in the Rue Rovigo. They are Moslems. Two men, two women and a child.'

Hassid stood examining his armchair with the brocaded cushions, and sighed heavily. He obliged himself to ask the question while fearing the answer.

'Do you want me to help you, Dr. Cada?'

Cada hesitated. Then he said,

'No. I'll manage—no, I definitely will manage . . . Perhaps for tonight, if I could borrow some equipment—it would save me a journey.'

Hassid walked with his shambling step into his surgery, and Cada took his wallet from his pocket to make sure that he had his medical pass. After a few minutes, Hassid returned carrying his fitted attaché case and wearing an old Panama hat.

'I'll come with you,' he said.

'No,' said Cada gratefully. 'I can't trouble you.'

But Hassid's eyes smiled behind the thick lenses of his glasses, and he said,

'Come on, my dear fellow. You know you don't mean it. When do you expect your taxi?'

As they were preparing to leave, they heard a quick running of footsteps and Eliane appeared. Hassid kissed her on the forehead and said,

'I must go out, Eliane. Don't wait for supper.'

'Why must you go out?' she asked reprovingly. 'Why don't you ask Dr. Lagny to take your night-calls? He's younger than you are.'

'I must go,' Hassid repeated. He patted her face with his fingertips, delicate despite the thickness of his hand, and stroked her hair away from her ear.

'Don't worry, Eliane,' he said. 'I won't be late.'

'Francesca says there's been trouble in the Rue Rovigo,' said Eliane.

'She knows everything,' said Hassid.

'Yes, she does,' Eliane answered.

Impulsively she put her arms round him and gave him a quick hug.

'Be very careful, Daddy,' she said. 'And if anybody says "stop", you just stop!'

The door-bell rang, and Francesca came in a few seconds later to announce that the taxi had arrived. Over his shoulder as he left, Hassid said to Eliane,

'Where's Robert? Did you lose him?'

And Eliane answered, 'Oh, no. He moves about as if he's lived here always.'

The Moslem driver drove fast down the Rue d'Isly and past the Casino before entering the winding Rue Rovigo. Hassid and Cada sat in silence. Occasionally, when another car drew alongside, their driver would jolt his brake, slowing down in order to make sure of the other's intentions, and jerking the two doctors without apology against the front seat.

'Which part of the Rue Rovigo?' Hassid asked at last.

'Near the Stadium,' said the driver, 'between the Fort and the Rampe des Zouaves.'

He pulled up at a road-block where he was waved down by an N.C.O. with a sub-machine-gun. The small queue of cars edged forward slowly for examination. At the check-point Hassid showed his pass to the soldier who handed it, in turn,

to an inspector in civilian clothes. The soldier shone his torch inside the car, and gave a quick glance at the documents of Cada and the driver. The inspector handed Hassid his pass, and leaning into the car, said,

‘Remember me, Dr. Hassid?’

Hassid peered at him, and said,

‘I remember your face.’

‘You’d remember my back better,’ said the inspector. ‘André Marin—you had me at the Mustapha with a dislocated vertebra.’

He smiled, and shook hands with Hassid.

‘We live in bad times,’ said the inspector. ‘The hospitals are too small. Everything’s stopped. We’re only building mortuaries.’

‘There’ll be better times,’ said Hassid. ‘Show me how you move that left leg.’

In the semi-darkness, Marin stretched his leg and bent the knee.

‘Excellent,’ said Hassid, looking over the window of the car. ‘That’s very good. You won’t have any more trouble.’

The cars behind had begun to sound their horns, cautiously and then in exasperation, as Hassid and Marin prolonged their talk. At last Marin shook hands with the doctor, and the taxi-driver put his car noisily into gear and started forward.

The house in the Rue Rovigo was an old building, shuttered on each floor in darkness. As the taxi drew up outside, a short-sleeved Moslem opened the door, addressed Cada respectfully in Arabic and looked inquiringly at Hassid.

‘He is a friend,’ Cada muttered, and the three men entered the cautiously opened door leading to the courtyard. The smell of stale cooking, cous-cous and oil overpowered the puffs of scent from the late lilac that blossomed on the solitary tree among the stone slabs. But when they climbed the stairs to the first floor, a pervasive stench of urine and faeces smothered the

kitchen smells in turn. In the first room, where they were received by a Moslem, a shrouded body lay on the floor. On a couch lay another man, his face white and agonized. Three women, one with her face uncovered but holding her *haik* between her teeth, rocked backwards and forwards in silence.

In the second room, two women, their bedclothes smeared with blood, lay with their black hair bedraggled over the cushions, while around them stood a group of silent watchers, their eyes turning above their veils to the doctors as they entered.

Cada, though timid in the Hassid household, assumed a different manner as he reacted to the deference of those around him. Gravely, he asked what had happened and when the women began to answer in concert, he addressed himself sternly to a weeping matriarch who had uncovered her face.

'You—tell us what happened.'

'A grenade,' she said, 'they threw a grenade into the Café de la Victoire. They threw a grenade.'

'Where is the child?' asked Hassid. They turned to the corner where a boy of about eight lay covered with a *burnous*, his dark eyes looking patiently from the shadows. Hassid knelt beside him, and said in Arabic,

'What's your name?'

The boy looked cautiously at those around him, and said, 'Salem.'

The doctor examined him briefly and asked, 'Does it hurt, Salem?'

'No.'

'Give me your hand.'

The boy put his frail, dirt-stained hand into the doctor's, and Hassid held it as he spoke.

'Can you stand up, Salem?'

The boy shook his head. The doctor took his other hand in his, and said,

'Tell me, Salem, do you like to play football?'

The boy nodded, and his eyes brightened. Then he said, 'Yes.'

'Could you kick a football now?'

'No,' said the boy.

'Who is he?' Hassid asked.

'We don't know,' the women said together. 'A *yaouled*.'

Hassid went over to Cada, and said,

'They can't be treated here.'

Cada looked straight into his face and said,

'Then they must die here.'

'The child too?' asked Hassid. 'I will take him to the Mustapha—there's a transverse lesion—it's a typical traumatic paraplegia.'

'You can't take him in an ambulance.'

'Then I will take him in a taxi.'

'It's dangerous.'

'He'll survive.'

'I don't mean for him—I mean for you.'

Hassid put his handkerchief to his mouth and coughed.

'I hope I'll survive as well.'

They washed their hands in the small closet, and returned to the older woman, whose arm had been lacerated at the shoulder.

When de Croissillon entered the bedroom, he opened the shutters to let in a chink of light, and undressed methodically, folding his clothes on the chair in the predetermined manner which had never left him since he had first done his military service. In the penumbra, he watched Eliane's sleeping head for a few seconds before going barefooted to the bathroom. The night was warm, and he had come down from El Biar in a crowded command car which had left him sticky and uncomfortable. Earlier in the evening, he had telephoned Eliane to tell her that he intended to dine with Vedoni, and she had responded not with the aggrieved impatience which the wives

of his friends usually showed on such occasions but with a tolerant good humour. 'I hope you'll be faithful,' she said to him. It was a catchphrase of their marriage, a one-time pledge of her trust and intimacy.

He turned on the shower cautiously so that its hiss wouldn't awaken her, but the glass partition swung on its hinges against the bath, and Eliane stirred, and murmured half-asleep,

'Walter!'

Her husband dried himself quickly, and spoke to her in a whisper.

'How are you, darling?'

She sighed and stretched herself, and said,

'What time is it?'

'Two o'clock. Vedoni gave me a lift.'

She dozed for a few moments, and then woke again and asked,

'How was it?'

'How was what?'

'Your dinner or whatever it was.'

De Croissillon came through the bathroom door, and stood for a few seconds in his white bathrobe, surveying Eliane, who had propped herself on her elbow.

'What are you looking at?' she asked him.

He came nearer and sat on the bed.

'You,' he said, taking her hand. 'It's very strange. I often think I want to get away from you, and as soon as I'm away, I want to be back.'

'Eliane looked at his strong fingers encircling hers, and said,

'You must come to bed. What time's your plane tomorrow?'

'I've got to be at Maison Blanche at eight o'clock. But everything's haywire. You never know whether the planes are going to take off at all. I heard tonight the OAS are insisting that you get their exit visas before you leave.'

'That'll be fun,' said Eliane, leaning back with her head on the pillow and still holding her husband's hand. 'Where do you find the secret visa office of the Secret Army?'

'I've no intention of finding out,' said de Croissillon, rising and walking towards the window. 'I've got a place on the Paris plane, and I'm going tomorrow to claim it.'

'You'll see Christine and Philippe?'

'I promise.'

'You promised last time.'

'I promise faithfully. I'm only going for three days, though . . . Do you want the window open?'

'In a moment,' she said. 'Come back and talk to me. I'm wide awake now.'

He offered her a cigarette from the box by the side of the bed, and together they smoked in silence before de Croissillon asked, 'What did you do this evening?'

'Nothing very much. Du Pré brought me back at seven or so, and Daddy was called out so I had to eat alone, and came to bed.'

De Croissillon, still in his bathrobe, stretched himself at Eliane's side, and watched the grey mist of his cigarette as it rose perpendicularly above their heads.

'Your father shouldn't go out at night any more. It isn't safe.'

'I keep telling him that,' said Eliane, frowning in the dark, 'but you know how stubborn the Hassids are.'

'Yes, they are,' said de Croissillon, and he lazily kissed her neck. 'All the same, he shouldn't go out.'

'I heard him come in before I fell asleep. I couldn't possibly have slept . . .'

'Those medical passes of theirs are useless. The FLN shoot first and then steal the passes.'

'He's got such an extraordinary indifference to everything that's going on. He thinks nothing of going into the Casbah to buy his macaroons. He talks to them in Arabic, and they love it. They all know him from the hospital.'

'It's dangerous for him, Eliane,' said de Croissillon. 'You can't trust them . . . Take tonight. They tossed a grenade into the Café de la Victoire. One of our fellows kicked it away. Six dead, twelve wounded . . . I'll open the window.'

He rose with his powerful body from the bed, and drew the curtains till they were a few feet apart.

'Another thing,' he said, talking to her from the window. 'I think your father ought to give up the Social Studies Association. The FLN and the Communists have got hold of it.'

Eliane propped herself on her arm, watching his face in profile against the light.

'Do you really think so?' she asked. 'They've been doing very good work in the regroupment camps. Daddy's always been enthusiastic about them. They were supposed to be non-political.'

'I don't know what they were,' said de Croissillon bluntly. 'I can tell you what they are today. They're FLN and Communist. They've gone in with the cakes and lemonade.' He threw his bathrobe from his shoulders, and unhooking the latch gave the shutters a gentle push. They parted with a creak, and he stood erect, gazing at the dark mass of the apartments opposite.

From the bed, Eliane watched his body in the pale illumination that entered the room. At first he was a silhouette. Then as the light touched the surface of his muscles, he seemed like one of those plaster casts which Eliane had drawn from for a whole year at the Ecole des Beaux Arts shortly after her second child was born. In those days she had liked to contemplate de Croissillon as he performed his exercises before the open window at night. A restlessness was mingled with her pleasure in the movement of his sunburnt shoulders, his strong spine and his thick thighs. And when she drew from the classical models in the studio, her drawings always resembled her husband. Now her glance passed like a touch over his arms and along his back. He hadn't changed physically in all the years she had known him, and an impatience grew on her that he would come into her bed and impose his flesh on hers.

The bed sagged beneath his weight as he entered it, and then his left hand moved towards her in the darkness, groping its way from her neck to her breast. She felt the weight of his

head on her bare shoulder and smelt the familiar odour of his hair, a mixture of vanilla and a faint moisture. She turned towards him with her arm encircling his hips. His mouth pressed against her, and opened, and she saw, with the ceiling above her, his head pressing down on hers with a habitual, eager violence. At the stir and hardening of his body, she passed her arms over his back, then drew her hand down to his buttocks.

And as she felt his body quiver, she remembered the hanged man in the Impasse Bougeaud, turning from side to side in the evening breeze as if on a ramp in a fashion show.

Her hands began to tremble at the recollection, and she drew her knees together in a gesture of defence. De Croissillon, feeling her sudden tensing, slackened his hold and lay for a moment inert against her still body. Then he heaved himself apart.

‘What is it, Eliane?’ he asked.

She lay with her eyes wide open, and said,

‘Nothing—nothing, darling.’

For a few minutes he didn’t move. Then he said, ‘Eliane!’ and reached out his hand towards her thigh.

But she disengaged herself, and said,

‘Let’s go to sleep.’

‘I don’t want to go to sleep,’ said de Croissillon.

He bent over her, and kissed the corner of her mouth, his hand gripping her breast.

‘No,’ said Eliane, ‘no—not now.’

De Croissillon withdrew from her, and said,

‘Is anything the matter?’

Their gaze met across the pillows. She reached out for his hand, and wanted to tell him about the dead, degraded body in the Impasse Bougeaud, but she felt his fingers limp in hers. His face had become cold as she had sometimes seen it when he had difficulties in his work. And she was conscious of her own body closed in a symbiosis of rejection.

‘There’s nothing the matter,’ she said. ‘Nothing. Except that it’s so late. I’m so tired.’

'Good night,' said de Croissillon. He turned his back to her, and as her knuckles came into contact with his body, she withdrew quickly.

Each time she shut her eyes, she could see the corpse with its vermilion wounds swinging between the ropes stretched across the street. The *barbouze* must have gone about with an open-necked shirt because beneath the deep brown V was the whiteness of his chest; the shameless loins were black, and the buttocks coquetted in the wind. She decided to lie awake so that the image wouldn't press itself behind her eyes. But her eyelids became tired, and she dozed into a dream. *The snake hung from the chandelier, ignored by Francesca who was tidying the flat while her father sat in his chair with a look of infinite sadness. She pitied the snake and was repelled by it. And* when she shuddered into wakefulness with her eyes moist and her heart thudding, she opened her eyes cautiously and then in relief, seeing the glint of the electric light bracket in the centre of the bedroom. Her husband had fallen asleep, and was breathing deeply with one arm flung across the bed, half-dangling to the floor.

She wanted to wake him, but when she saw his steady breathing her inclination ebbed away. She lay still and du Pré occurred to her mind. She liked him, she thought. He was gentle, and had been courteous to her father, and when she had forced herself to look at the *barbouze*, he had held her arm. She wondered if he would come on Sunday, and thought of his wife and children in Paris. And Christine and Philippe—Philippe with his tender brown eyes and Christine with sharp blue eyes like her father's—when would she see them again? Tomorrow she would call at Persephone's to have her dress fitted for the Gala in Aid of the Victims of the Algerian War. It was pale green, and the thought of the dress drew her into sleep with her fingers relaxed, away from the Impasse Bougeaud and the curious faces staring at the *barbouze*.

CHAPTER III

BETWEEN the acts, the audience strolled gravely, engaged in an assessment of the performers and of each other.

'My trouble,' said Madame Rollin, 'is that I can never follow the libretto. I know who Aïda is, and I know who Radamès is. But I can never understand who all those priests are. It's the same with *The Magic Flute*. Whenever someone comes on with a great bass voice and a crinkly beard, I know he's going to settle everything. But how—why—what?'

She held the arm of Peyron as they walked side by side with Eliane and Dr. Hassid through the marble foyer of the Opera House.

Hassid smiled and said,

'You've usually got to work it out by algebra. There's always an equation with cross-references. These operas are highly stylized.'

'Aïda,' said Peyron in a patient voice, 'is a simple story of the conflict of loyalties. Aïda, the daughter of the king of Ethiopia, is in love with Radamès, the commander-in-chief of the Egyptians.'

'That much,' said Madame Rollin in a similar rhythm, 'I had grasped. But Aïda is really too unattractive. I think Irène Bernadotte has been going on too long. You remember her before the war, don't you, Eliane?'

'I think she's lovely and timeless,' said Eliane. 'Some women are like that. It's a heavenly gift.'

'My face is timeless,' said Madame Rollin. 'But the body—!'

'Amneris is Pharaoh's daughter,' Peyron went on. 'She loves the C.-in-C. But in the end, she and Aïda do him in.'

'Love is destructive,' said Madame Rollin.

'Why do you say that?' Eliane asked quickly.

'It's an appetite for possession. If the lover and the loved—the eater and the eaten—are in harmony, all well and good. But when the appetite exceeds the availability—that's very bad. That's how wars begin. Isn't that right, Peyron?'

'Quite right,' said Peyron, pulling at the tunic of his uniform with his right hand. More than half the men in the foyer were officers, and he could recognize at a glance those who had lately arrived from France and those who had been withdrawn from the *bled*. The pale ones were from Paris, recently attached to home headquarters outside the city. The sunburnt ones, the parachutists and the infantrymen, were on leave. They moved in retinues attending the girls of the committee who wore posies of gentians tied to their collecting-boxes.

As Dr. Hassid and his group moved towards the vast fresco at the end of the gallery, he acknowledged with a friendly bow the greetings which came to him from all sides. A pretty girl in a white dress came up, followed by a bodyguard of three parachutist officers.

'Dr. Hassid,' she said, 'do you remember me? I am Jeannette de Mordélet.'

Hassid took her hand, and bowed over it.

'Of course I remember you. You always look like a spring morning.'

The girl laughed and introduced her escorts.

'Dr. Hassid is the most terrible flatterer. After my motor accident he used to visit me every day at the Bel Air Clinic, and every day he told me I looked like a spring morning—even when I felt like death.'

'Dr. Hassid has great perception,' said the major with the scar on his neck.

'Oh, no, he's just kind,' said Jeannette, putting her hand on Hassid's arm. 'He really made me walk—'

'Will you sell me a programme?' Hassid interrupted her.

'But, Father,' said Eliane, 'you already have two.'

'Yes, my dear,' said Hassid. 'But I want that programme in particular. I'll give you a thousand Old Francs.'

'That will be lovely,' said Jeannette. She undid the bunch of flowers from her collecting-box, handed them to Hassid, and kissed him on the cheek.

He smiled with embarrassment as she left him, and pushed the gentians into his breast pocket, from which they straggled as if from a window-box.

'Do take them out, they look silly,' said Eliane.

'No, leave them alone,' said Madame Rollin. 'They look delightful—isn't that so, Peyron?'

Peyron looked helplessly at Eliane, and said,

'I think they'd go well with your own dress.'

For a moment he looked at her green silk cocktail dress with its low back before adding ponderously, 'But you need no ornament, Eliane.'

From the stream of promenaders moving in the opposite direction du Pré bowed in passing, and Hassid returned his greeting.

'He looks very lonely,' said Madame Rollin.

'Yes,' said Hassid to Eliane, 'we must ask him home more often.'

'It must be a miserable job, writing reports on ancient monuments,' said Madame Rollin, 'when he knows very well that anything he writes will be ignored in Paris. And anyhow, even if it were noted, no one would act on it. Can you see de Sigle'—she named one of the largest *colons* from the Mitidja—'doing anything about Roman ruins on instructions from Paris?'

'What I can't understand,' said Peyron, turning his head to watch du Pré moving in the direction of the *loges*, 'is why he's based on Algiers. I'd expect him to be out in the country.'

'It's all a matter of algebra,' said Hassid.

'Father's going through one of his potty phases,' said Eliane,

and Hassid put his arm affectionately round her shoulders. 'This week is Algebra Week.'

'But it is so,' said Hassid. 'At the Ministry of Fine Arts a year ago, someone decided on the basis of the Masséna Report published four years ago that something should be done about the artistic treasures of Algeria. Eventually, they decided to send a commission to examine the question on the spot, and make recommendations. They do so. But what they leave out of account is time. It's the x in every problem. It's too late for the Ministry of Culture to send men out here to catalogue monuments. We're living in a different world.'

'I would ask du Pré to luncheon one day,' said Madame Rollin. 'But food is getting so difficult. Yesterday, there were no artichokes—the day before, no gas—the day before, no electricity—the day before, no artichokes.'

Behind her was a huge bas-relief of Flora surrounded by nymphs pouring an elaborate assortment of vegetables from a cornucopia. Eliane pointed to it, and said,

'That's the way to get your artichokes. I'm so tired of being searched for *strounga* every time I go shopping. I wonder what would happen if those ladies in white gloves really found some plastic in my shopping-bag.'

'They'd ask you kindly to leave it outside,' said Madame Rollin. 'There's no order any more in Algiers. Isn't that right, Hassid?'

'Yes, there is,' said Dr. Hassid. 'I got fined only yesterday for parking my car outside the General Post Office.'

Madame Rollin wagged her finger at him, and the diamonds on her two rings glinted in the light from the massive chandeliers at the centre of the painted ceiling.

'That was naughty of you—very naughty. It's a very serious offence.'

'Yes,' said Eliane. 'Now if you'd done something trivial like——' Her voice faded.

'Like what?' Peyron asked.

‘—like shooting a Moslem, the police would probably have told you not to do it again.’

‘They haven’t collected the garbage in the Rue Abbé Grégoire for ten days,’ said Madame Rollin plaintively. ‘Even the rag-pickers leave the bins alone, the smell’s so appalling. At night when I look out of my window—there’s nothing but cats and rats in the streets. You will take me home, Peyron?’

‘Of course,’ said Peyron. ‘You’re all Cinderellas now—back home by curfew.’

‘I remember,’ said Madame Rollin, ‘when you could dine at the Equipe at ten and dance all night.’

‘I’m told the night clubs now open at five,’ said Peyron, ‘and lovers dance by candlelight in the illusion that it’s already night.’

‘It isn’t an illusion,’ said Madame Rollin.

The bell to mark the end of the interval began to sound insistently, and the audience moved in twin currents towards the corridors. Du Pré paused to greet Hassid as he passed, and Eliane said,

‘You won’t forget Sunday.’

‘I’m looking forward to it, Madame,’ du Pré said courteously, and it was as if the ease of their war-time acquaintance by which she had called him Robert when they had met again, was now superseded by a well-mannered formality.

The bell which had stopped for a few moments now seemed to ring more insistently, and Dr. Hassid said,

‘Come for lunch, Robert. I want to have you to myself for a little.’

‘I’m liable to talk to you about the Arch of Caracalla at Tébessa.’

‘Nothing would please me more,’ said Hassid. ‘I think Tébessa’s much neglected.’

As they moved on, he said to Eliane,

‘I like du Pré.’

'He seems very kind.'

'There's more to him than that.'

'Let's go the other way,' said Eliane. 'I can see the Lecrets coming. He'll give us a lecture on French Algeria since 1830 if we're not careful—and the Crémieux decree "that gave you Israelites French citizenship".'

Professor Lecret, a senior member of the Algiers Medical Association, was approaching them, addressing his wife with the absorbed interest which he always assumed towards her in public. She was a small, plump woman with cherry eyes whom he had married in Marseilles shortly after he qualified as a doctor, and during their years in Algiers her life had been devoted to an unequal struggle to keep pace with the adaptation of her husband's personality to his promotions. An ardent follower of Marshal Pétain in 1940, he had become a Socialist in 1944, claiming a friendship with M. Auriol which he had never possessed, then a candidate for the MRP in the elections of 1945, a member of the Public Safety Committee on May 13th, 1958, an alternate candidate for the UNR, and finally a leader of the 'I-am-French' Movement.

'He says he's French,' Madame Rollin once said, 'because his name was originally Lancredo. He's a Spaniard from Tangiers. I know the family. They came to Marseilles in 1914, and Algiers in 1920.'

'Let's just say hello to them and move on,' said Hassid.

He composed his face and inclined his head towards Madame Lecret as she and her husband came near. Lecret whispered something to her; her features stiffened, and before Dr. Hassid could retract from his friendly posture, both he and Eliane were left with a lingering, unanswered smile on their faces as the Lecrets passed them, their heads held so rigidly that they quivered.

'You know,' said Eliane to her father, 'I believe that ghastly little man cut us deliberately.'

'Oh, no,' said Hassid. 'It's impossible. I was only talking to

him the day before yesterday at the Mustapha. He was very friendly. He asked me to sign the "I-am-French" petition.'

'Did you?'

'I'm not quite sure—I said I would—yes, I did. I remember now. He gave me a petition and I signed it. Shouldn't I have?'

'Well, I wouldn't have. It's absurd. You *are* French. Why insist? . . . But I still believe that he cut us on purpose.'

They had reached the door of their box. The *ouvreuse* with the black dress and the white wimple said 'Sh-sh-sh', and opened the door on Madame Rollin, already seated on the chair nearest to the stage, and Peyron, who was standing, waiting for Eliane and the doctor to arrive. Aïda was singing *O cieli azzurri*, a lament for her lost country, and the audience had fallen into a brooding silence.

Eliane leaned over the balcony and studied through her opera-glasses the tiers of boxes with the pink glow behind them, then the sombre pit of the theatre touched at its fringes by the moonlight of the stage Nile. Radamès, a portly figure, heavily made-up even to his brown calves swelling through his cothurns, was singing a duet with Aïda who urged him to flee with her through the virgin forests—*Là tra foreste virgini*—where they would forget the world.

Eliane shut her eyes, and leaned back in her chair while the duet soared and swooned. What world did she want to forget? Algiers—Paris—Oran. They were journeys around a point of nothingness. Walter in Paris. He would probably see Ghislainé. And that didn't matter either. Ten years ago, five years ago, perhaps she might have thought of it. *Through the virgin forests to forget the world.*

She glanced to her side at her father's rapt expression as he listened to the music. His glasses had slid slightly forward on his nose, and his forehead was sweating beneath the fuzz of white hair. And involuntarily, she felt a remoteness mingled with her tenderness for him. After her marriage to de Croissillon,

they had gone to live for a year in Oran, where he had a shipping company. 'The atmosphere in the Rue Michelet is too Talmudic,' de Croissillon had said to her one afternoon as they rested on their terrace in Positano where they spent their honeymoon. She had laughed, and she remembered her laughter with shame. But they had moved to Oran.

Later, when Dr. Hassid used to make his annual visit to Paris, she and her husband had a wordless understanding that he would have to absent himself. Her father would politely regret the circumstances; a box of cigars for de Croissillon was always one of the presents which he brought from Algiers in addition to the toys for the children and a gold charm for Eliane herself. But in the last few years, with the rise in Sahara Oil, de Croissillon had assumed a more amiable attitude towards his father-in-law. Dr. Hassid's connections with the Government had been useful in the early days of the Reggane Project. His distinction as a neuro-surgeon had received a metropolitan—indeed, a world—endorsement when he delivered his paper on Anterior Rhizotomy at the International Congress of Neurologists in Geneva and he was recommended for a Nobel Prize. For the past three years, they had spent a few weeks of early spring with her father at the Rue Michelet, and with their increased intimacy, de Croissillon and Professor Hassid had developed a mutual respect.

Eliane studied her father, and remembering her childhood panic lest one day he might die and the fear she still felt each time she left him that she might never see him again, tried to recapture the tenderness of the past. But the thought of her father walking hand-in-hand with her to the market in the Rue de la Victoire with its banks of flowers puffing their scent in the air—a recollection that in Paris never failed to bring tears to her eyes—was unrelated to the self-absorbed old man, wheezing slightly as he strained forward to hear the echoing words, 'The Gorges of Napata', by which Radamès betrayed his country.

She turned her opera-glasses to the stalls, looking for du Pré, and found him at the end of the eighth row next to a fair-haired woman with a black bow in her hair. Curious about their relationship, Eliane scrutinized her carefully; then having satisfied herself that they were unconnected, she examined du Pré himself as he sat at ease with one hand resting on a tip-up seat at his side. On the stage, Radamès was being led into a subterranean dungeon to be condemned by the High Priest as a traitor. The hush in the audience had changed its nature. Till then, it had been attentive. Now it was like a withheld sigh and stirred in her a vague anxiety that made her want to breathe against an invisible constriction. And then she remembered that it had been so the night before with the suffocating weight of her husband above her and the condemned corpse swinging from the sky. '*Traditor!*' the priest intoned. Their voices were loaded with doom. The charge. The verdict. The execution. '*Traditor!*' After each indictment, the conviction. '*Traditor!*' The audience murmured with the judges, and the sigh became a collective voice. Traitor!

Du Pré was watching the scene impassively. He had folded his hands in front of him, and seeing his calm expression Eliane found that she herself had ceased to tremble.

* •

In the spring of 1944 she was sixteen, and Algiers itself as the fighting moved to Italy had become a place of gaiety. With de Gaulle's Provisional Government installed at the Lycée Fromentin, it had become fashionable to have been of the Resistance. The Cross of Lorraine in gold was the modish ornament of the wives of the Vichy supporters who, at their afternoon bridge-parties in the villas of El Biar, explained to each other how a public support of Pétain had, in fact, concealed their clandestine activities. In the evening, they sometimes entertained Allied officers from the Hôtel St. Georges, and at the week-ends, they drove out to their estates south of

Algiers where in the company of the administrator and friendly *colons*, they speculated at ease on the new men.

For those like Dr. Hassid who had organized the Resistance in the city and helped the Allied landings, the year 1944 was a year of hope and release. For the Jews, the restoration of the Loi Crémieux, which General Giraud had briefly annulled, meant the confirmation of their rights as citizens. The short phase when Admiral Darlan had successfully dealt with the resisters as traitors was over. The Moslems too had raised their heads in hope; General de Gaulle's speech at Brazzaville meant that they would eventually have full rights as citizens. But the American 'presence' in the city made the subtleties of constitutional settlements academic. 'A single goal—victory' was the slogan put out by Giraud. The messes, the bars, the restaurants and the homes were united in taking the war easily. The black-out had been lifted. Only the Casbah with the white-washed scrawls, 'Off-limits', gave any sign of prophylactic segregation.

Meanwhile, the Hassid flat had become like a club for the resisters and their friends. While still a schoolgirl, Eliane was already accustomed to the excited conversations of Dr. Hassid's 'afternoons' which only music could silence. The soldiers who visited them quickly became attuned to the reverence which Hassid's colleagues and intimates felt for him. They recognized too the limits of banter. Eliane had to be treated as an adult hostess except that in matters unsuitable for a well-brought-up girl, she had to be treated as a schoolgirl. Everyone flirted with her, and she flirted with everyone. But the only one who escorted her alone was de Croissillon. He had been taken prisoner by the British in Syria, and on his release had served on General Giraud's staff. As a liaison officer with A.F.H.Q., he spent the last year of the war with little to do except lead an active social life in Algiers. He proposed marriage to Eliane with the same ethnological curiosity as some of his friends had shown in choosing wives in Indo-China, adding the calculation

that under the French Republic it wouldn't harm the career of a former Vichy officer to have a Jewish wife. And Eliane, for her part, after the deference of all her father's friends, turned warmly to the tall officer who, although eight years older than she, respected her as a mature woman, introduced her as his fiancée to General Catroux, and who with his cold blue eyes conjured up in her mind places in France she had never seen like La Guerche-de-Bretagne, Chatelleraut and St. Christophe-en-Bazelle.

When her father counselled her to think very carefully before making her decision because of the many differences between them, she said joyfully, 'Oh, but we know all about that. We've discussed it all. The differences won't make any difference.' Madame Rollin accompanied her to the village near Libourne where they were married in the Abbaye which had once formed part of de Croissillon's family's estate.

*

The first time she had gone out alone with de Croissillon, he had taken her to the Municipal Opera to hear *Lakmé*. The place hadn't changed since then. The proscenium hadn't become smaller with time, nor the costumes better fitting. But that night, it had seemed to her as if the Opera House was open to the sky, and the music flowed inwards as well as outwards.

*

And now it was as oppressive as the dungeon where Aida and Radamès were singing their farewell to earth. *Addio terra*. The doomed lovers were saying a desperate good-bye that struggled with the ascending violins against the weight of earth. The theme recurred, the memory of a victorious ballet threading the anguished adieu, striving and fading and fading.

The stage darkened. The stone was too heavy, and the green curtain slowly folded on the dying lovers. Madame Rollin

wept; there was a flutter of handkerchiefs and a blowing of noses; but the tears turned to smiles and relief as the curtain rose on Aïda and Radamès, resuscitated and on excellent terms with their accusers, bowing delightedly in reply to the relieved and eager applause.

After the second curtain, the Opera House began to empty rapidly. Although *Aïda* had begun at six o'clock and there had only been a single interval, the audience was anxious to get home before the curfew for vehicles came into force. The exits were congested with jostling people, and the house-lights began to go off, even before the boxes were empty.

'Wonderful!' said Madame Rollin. 'Wonderful—that exquisite soprano.' She began to hum '*La fatal pietra sopra me si chiuse*. Who'll give me a lift home?'

'We will,' said Eliane quickly.

'No—I have already promised to give Madame Rollin a lift,' said Peyron.

They were being pushed through the doors towards the Square in a solid, good-humoured mass, and Eliane called to her father,

'Don't get separated from me.'

A pock-marked doctor called Lelong from the Mustapha Hospital edged close to her.

'You'd better keep an eye on your father.'

'What do you mean?' she asked, smiling.

'Well, he's started bringing in patients by taxi,' the doctor replied, and Eliane noticed that he was unsmiling.

'Is that unusual?' she asked.

'Only when the patients are,' he answered with a malicious intonation. 'Last night he brought in a little FLN-er.'

The crowd surged to the left, and their conversation was broken off.

At last Dr. Hassid and Eliane found themselves projected through the outer doors onto the steps leading to the Square. They walked down in silence towards the car-park.

'Did you enjoy the opera?' she asked him when they reached the car by the row of palm-trees.

'Yes,' he said, and accidentally dropped the folded sheet of paper which he was holding in his hand as he groped with his car-keys. He bent and hurriedly picked it up.

'What have you got there?' Eliane asked.

'Nothing,' Hassid replied.

'It must be something.'

'It's nothing—don't fuss.'

Again he fumbled with his keys, and again he dropped the piece of paper. This time Eliane picked it up and glanced at it in the light of a street lamp. Her father looked at her, and she looked back at him, their mouths drawn down with their isolation.

'How did you get it?' she asked.

'An *ouvreuse* gave it to me,' he said. 'She said a gentleman gave it to her.'

'It must have been someone at the Opera—someone who wrote it suddenly on the spur of the moment. That's why it's in Italian.'

She opened the paper, and they both studied the word '*Traditor*' scrawled over the page with the signature 'OAS'.

'It must be a joke,' said Eliane. 'The OAS would have written "Traitor" or something else. It's absurd. It must be a joke.'

'Yes,' said Hassid, kissing his daughter on the cheek as she took her place beside him in the car. 'Of course it's a joke.'

The policeman on traffic duty, who knew him well, saluted him and waved him on in front of half a dozen other cars which were honking their way out of the line of parked vehicles.

Du Pré returned to his hotel on foot. The streets were fully lit as if to accommodate by night the same crowds who had filled the pavements by day. But now the Rue Morbihan had

the emptiness of a street in a dream. Occasionally voices penetrated the tiers of blank shutters. They were joyless and quickly stifled. Du Pré walked fast, his footsteps bouncing an echo between the tall buildings. When he overtook occasional stragglers from the Coliseum cinema, they hesitated, drew apart and watched him till he was past.

The Hôtel d'Angleterre was already closed for the night when he arrived. He pressed the bell, and while he waited for the concierge to open the heavy wooden door, he turned with his back to the building, facing the street.

'Yes?' said a voice through a speaking-tube.

Du Pré gave his name, and he heard the whirr as the electrically controlled lock was unfastened.

'How was the gala?' the concierge asked. She wore a white blouse, and her fat, bare arms were spread over her desk. They looked as if a finger poked into their white oedematous texture would leave a hole.

'Excellent, Madame Farrière,' said du Pré, 'excellent. Were there any telephone calls for me?'

She gave him his key and said,

'No—no telephone calls. There's another strike today at the post office.'

She sighed and said,

'It can't go on like this.'

'No,' said du Pré.

'It usen't to be like this,' she went on. 'Yes—at the beginning the FLN murdered and threw grenades. But Massu cleaned things up. That's the man we want.'

'Massu?'

'Yes—if they'd left it to him, it would have been all right. But de Gaulle got jealous—sent him to Germany or somewhere. But what do you expect of de Gaulle?—mixed up with the Jews—the Rothschilds and all that lot. What they want to do is get hold of the oil in the Sahara and hand it over to the Italians. It's good business.'

Her face became ruminative.

'God knows how it's going to end. How long are you going to stay here?'

'About six months.'

'It's no life,' she said. 'No life at all. Much worse than in 1940. No comparison. You could die of starvation now and no one would notice. You've only been here a week. It's like living under siege. Ever been in the army?'

'Oh, yes,' said du Pré amiably. 'I was in Italy in the war—Indo-China—'

'Indo-China? I had two nephews there. One was killed at Haiphon.'

'I'm very sorry.'

'What did he die for?' the concierge asked. 'A few politicians in Paris decided he ought to die.' She made a gesture of spitting. 'Were you a regular soldier?'

'On the reserve.'

'Why did you leave the army?'

'I was wounded—invalided out.'

'You were lucky. You would have been killed in the *djebels*. I know. I can see it in your face. They say I'm psychic, M. du Pré.'

Du Pré twirled his key in his hand, and said,

'In that case, I'm glad to know what I missed.'

'I can tell by looking at the eyes,' said the concierge. 'You've got eyes that tell me you'd have been killed in the *djebels*.'

'Good night, Madame,' said du Pré cheerfully.

He opened the door of the tiny lift that could only carry three people in comfort, pulled the grille, pressed the button, and nearly lost his balance as with a sudden hiccup the lift began to climb towards the fifth floor.

Everything about the hotel seemed shrunken—the narrow staircase, the carpets that didn't cover the floors, the walls papered only to the halfway mouldings, from which they were painted to the floor, the miniature pictures, the notices with

proscriptions against dogs and loud music and the use of the bathrooms after midnight. His room—No. 527, the five merely standing for the number of the floor—was itself as narrow as a cell. It seemed crushed between two double rooms, a potential annexe to either but unviable in itself. The bed was out of proportion to the room—a long, wide sofa which, after a few attempts by the management at modernizing the hotel, now contrived to swing, partly at any rate, beneath a bookcase. For its double life as bed and sofa, it had a brown fringe which gave it a respectable neutrality at all times.

Du Pré undressed and washed in the basin near his small writing-desk. Then, in his pyjamas, he sat down to write his daily letter to his wife in Paris.

‘My dearest Louise,’ he began. He stopped, and examined her photograph with the two children on his writing-desk. She had had it specially taken before he left for Algiers, and although she was smiling the retoucher in removing the creases at the corner of her eyes had turned her into someone coldly unfamiliar who had already gained precedence over the original.

‘This has been a fairly quiet day. I hope you won’t be disturbed by the newspaper accounts of violence over here. When you consider that within a few square miles of home more people are killed and injured in a day in traffic accidents than in a week of violence in Algiers, you’ll be able to see the thing in proportion.’

He re-read his statistical invention, and went on,

‘Life here is very normal. I’ve just got back from the Opera where I saw a moderately good performance of *Aida*. The Opera House is magnificent, but the costumes were a bit tatty, and the prompter bellowed so loudly at times that it was hard to hear the singer.

‘I’ve met some very pleasant people since I’ve been here including Dr. Hassid, one of the senior neuro-surgeons at the Mustapha. You may remember my talking to you about him.

He's an old friend from 1944. He's a maniac about music, and he has musical "afternoons" on Sundays.

'I will try and write to you daily when I am in the city, but don't worry if you don't hear from me. The postal service is bad because of strikes and interruptions of the air service. Then again, I expect I'll be doing a certain amount of traveling in the *bled*.

'I hope you're feeling well and that you haven't had any more migraine.'

He wanted to write affectionately, but the unfamiliar face in the photograph with its fair hair freshly set inhibited him.

'I miss you very much,' he wrote, 'and the children as well. Life in a hotel is never very gay, but I regard the next six months as a Lenten phase. Not only in my own life but in France's too. I hope that it may——'

He crossed out all the words after '. . . the children as well', and ended his letter. 'Do look after yourself, darling. Love, Robert.'

After he had sealed the letter, he typed his report, placed it in his briefcase, and testing the door to make sure it was locked, turned off the light.

Then, after kneeling briefly in prayer, he got into bed. The time was twenty past two, and the city was hushed. Within a few minutes du Pré slept deeply, a frown between his eyes.

CHAPTER IV

LEAVING the Cathedral after early-morning Mass, du Pré stood for a few seconds on the steps, surrounded by *yaouleds* who clamoured for his custom with their shoe-boxes slung over their shoulders. Two of them held on to each of his legs, and du Pré firmly appointed a fair-haired Kabyle boy to be his shoe-shiner. Philosophically, the others abandoned him, and he stood in the bright sunlight looking down at the rose-banked stalls of the flower market and the Place du Gouvernement beyond it.

He felt relaxed, and content to be back in the city which had been for him a refuge in the exile of war. Newhaven, Colchester, Sidi-Ferruch, Tunis—then later, Sicily, the crawl up the spine of Italy with Algiers in between, illuminated in his memory by a perpetual spring sunshine. Through all his journeyings as a soldier in Europe and Asia, he could summon up at will the slowly moving crowds, the impression of white *burnous* and *haïk*, the sugar-cube villas, the dazzling sea at the end of the streets, the smell of tar and ships and fish in the port beneath the ramps, the uniforms, and above all the tranquillity of the flat in the Rue Michelet where he could listen to music and discover in Hassid and Eliane the home from which the war had driven him.

And when the DC6 of Air France surged and lurched into the air at Orly, his own mouth still conscious of the warm cheeks of René and Linette and the tear-stained face of his wife, he didn't feel, among the businessmen and officials who sat glumly strapped in their safety-belts, that the assignment for which he had volunteered was bringing him to an alien country. He knew the streets of Algiers as well as he knew

those of the eighth *arrondissement* where they had lived since their marriage. During his leaves, he had walked in civilian clothes through every lane of the Casbah, and he had studied the Roman remains around the city in the hope that one day he might record them.

At first Louise had objected to his journey. He had spent too much time away from his children. He would interrupt his career at the Ministry; but when he explained that he would only be away a few months and that at the end of his tour in Algeria he might even be promoted, she began to relent. And as he was saying that civil servants were, in a sense, like soldiers, she interrupted to ask the maid about the summer holidays, and he didn't finish his sentence. His wife, he had noticed, during the twelve years of their marriage, was given to sudden outbursts of extravagant emotion on critical occasions such as the death of a second cousin or a miscarriage by a close friend, followed, fortunately, by a period of total and serene oblivion. He knew that within three days of his departure she would have settled down again to her daily preoccupation with her children, her coiffure, and the interminable telephone calls to her friends which always exasperated him when he wanted to talk to her from his office.

Paris had fallen away from the aircraft. It became an ochre model, sundered by an umber river. And du Pré, unfastening his seat-belt, rejected the city with relief. The faces around him were joyless. But he, feeling the heave of the aeroplane as it set on its course into the clear blue sky, was liberated. He thought of some of his friends sitting in the Restaurant Lipp, discussing the Algerian war—cynically, apathetically, passionately, analytically, intellectually. And he thought, recalling a dramatist's phrase, that if they could go to Heaven or listen to a lecture on Heaven, they would choose to listen to the lecture.

He stood on the steps of the Cathedral feeling fit and relaxed

after the quiet night and an early morning which so far had been undisturbed by fire-engines and ambulances. The *yaouled* finished cleaning his shoes, and du Pré, after giving him a New Franc which was received with incredulity, began to walk in the direction of the Place du Gouvernement. Although it bordered the Casbah, many Europeans strolled among the Moslems gathered in knots around the equestrian statue, the taxi-ranks, the story-tellers and the scribes.

'At this moment,' du Pré said to himself, 'no one anywhere knows exactly where I am. If anyone were to shoot me, I'd be described as an "unknown European, nearly six feet tall, with grey eyes"', because I've left my identification papers at the hotel. I'd lie first in the gutter and then in the mortuary till I'd been missed. Then someone would tell someone in the Gouvernement Général that I hadn't turned up for work. Then they might find me. And then, I suppose, someone would tell Louise, who'd weep like a professional mourner for a week.'

The sense of anonymity among the groups in the square gave him pleasure which even his obituary reflections didn't lessen. Among the shouting sellers of gazelle horns, the *yaouleds* and the trumpeting of the ships a few hundred yards away, no one could think of death very seriously. Du Pré walked confidently towards the archway that marked the entrance to the Casbah, and recalled how eighteen years ago he had gone on a shopping expedition with Eliane to buy macaroons for her father at that very spot and how he had inadvertently jumped the queue of women shoppers, since he approached from the rear, and how they had abused Eliane who had made a spirited defence, and how he had been saved from the general wrath by a matron who had cried, 'But he's a soldier!'

In Paris, du Pré had often remembered the day he had spent with Eliane—she had been seventeen or eighteen—a day in which all colour and sound and smell and even the touch of her fingertips when they had left each other had been intensified, so that despite absence and time its minutiae were still as im-

mediate in their joy as they had been then. From time to time in those years, du Pré had news of the Hassids. They had ceased to correspond after the doctor had sent du Pré the announcement of Eliane's marriage, and du Pré had sent her an edition of Verlaine's poems which he had once heard her admire.

And then, he occasionally heard of de Croissillon. When the Sahara Oil Corporation was formed, he came into the news as one of its principal promoters. A photograph of him and Eliane appeared in *France-Soir*. But although du Pré knew that they lived in Paris, he had made no attempt to see either. His wife had asked him once or twice about the Hassids, and then lost interest. For his own part, he had no wish to see Eliane in any other ambience than the one in which he had known her. In Algiers, she was preserved for him in a framework of youth, untainted by disillusionment, failure and the fading of time.

Now he had seen her again, and a delight had returned to his existence, and with it a sense of homecoming which he had never found in his own home. He turned his face towards the sun, and felt its heat; and his muscles tensed with his purpose to do his job well, and the hope, half-formed, that he might yet recapture in his life what had seemed lost.

CHAPTER V

FROM the back of the car as du Pré drove towards Tipaza, Dr. Hassid offered a commentary on the landscape. They had set off at eight o'clock in the morning, and by ten they had already left behind them the stream of oncoming lorries bringing produce from the Sahel. Occasionally they had to slow down before overtaking a military convoy. But otherwise the road was almost deserted, and du Pré was able to drive fast, so that the fragrance from the tomato fields and vineyards along their route blew in through the windows. The red villas, misted with bougainvillaea and wistaria, flicked past against a changing background of sea and mountains that quivered in the pale copper light of the morning sun.

'When the Chénoua dances, the day burns,' said Hassid. 'The Arabs say so, and they've been living here long enough. Eliane, you should have brought a sun-hat.'

'Yes, Father,' said Eliane obligingly. 'But for the time being, it's cool.'

'Shall we go to Cherchell?' du Pré asked.

'No,' said Eliane. 'Let's stop at Tipaza. We'll try and see the Tomb of the Christian Girl. All those in favour of stopping at Tipaza?'

All three raised a hand in the air, and Hassid said,

'Good—I've brought my Baedeker.'

'Heavens,' said Eliane. 'Let me look at the date.'

She snatched the book from Hassid, and said with a squeal, 'It's 1908!'

Hassid snatched it back from her, and said,

'That's nothing. Listen to this.'

He turned the pages and read,

'... the Emperor Claudius made it a Latin colony and city which prospered, and is believed to have numbered 20,000 inhabitants. Later, the Vandals by their cruelty drove a large proportion of the population to Spain, and those who remained and refused to be converted to the Arian heresy had their tongues cut out and their right hands cut off.'

'Stop!' said Eliane. 'It's beastly. Perhaps we oughtn't to go there.'

'Oh, it's all right,' said Hassid. 'Baedeker says the Kabyles are "well disposed to visitors and travelling among them is perfectly safe . . . To the west, there is a fine sandy beach for bathers."'

'I want to bathe,' said Eliane. 'Did you remember to bring your swimming things, Robert?'

'Yes,' said du Pré. 'But to begin with, your father and I are going for a walk.'

'What shall we do first?' said Hassid as du Pré drove into the car-park of the Hôtel Beau-Rivage.

'I think,' said du Pré, observing his excitement at the prospect of the day's excursion, 'I think we'll look at some of the Roman remains—and then, if I'm strong enough, perhaps we'll go up to the Basilica of St. Salsa.'

They walked through the hotel towards the group of holiday-makers from Algiers and Oran who were chatting on the terrace overlooking the gardens. The women in cotton dresses or slacks and the men in linen trousers and sports shirts had an untroubled nonchalance. Some were preparing to go to the beach. Others had settled for the morning in their chaises-longues. They spoke vivaciously, Parisian accents mingling with the rolling of meridional r's, and an occasional Spanish sibilance, their voices asserting themselves over the bubbling fountain and the shouts of their children.

'Well, off you go,' said Eliane to Hassid.

He kissed her, and she watched him leaning on his stick, with his Panama hat on his head, while du Pré inclined over him in animated discussion with his hand protectively at

his elbow as they walked down the stairway leading to the gardens.

*

An hour later they had climbed to the ruins of the Basilica of St. Salsa, and were sitting on a fallen cornice stone. The sun was high above them, and the sky had changed from its livid glow into an incandescent bluish-white. Beyond the broken columns and the rose-coloured flagstones, the sea and sky had begun to merge in a haze and the Chénoua trembled in a reflected dazzle from water and air.

Hassid wiped his sweating forehead and said,

‘Did it ever strike you, Robert, that the Romans colonized this part of Algeria longer than we did? Two hundred years . . . There are no absolute rights to empire, you know. Empires have to be deserved as well as won.’

‘Deserved?’ du Pré echoed him. ‘The Roman Christians built cathedrals. The Vandals turned them into ruins. And the Moslems sold the stones.’

A lizard darted down the pitted masonry, and hid itself in a clump of blood-red anemones.

‘How many cathedrals have we built in France? How many have we built in Algeria in this century?’ asked Hassid. ‘France’s chief ambition today is to build nuclear weapons. We live in an age of nihilism—it’s an age without faith. At the time of St. Augustine of Thagasta, men thought of building cathedrals. It was a time when religion was based on respect for human personality.’

‘And now?’ asked du Pré.

‘Now,’ said Hassid, ‘since Hitler and Stalin, there’s no longer respect for man in the image of God. The characteristic sin of our times is genocide. The blindness of the mass to the individual . . . We see it every day in Algeria. It’s the legacy of the Nazis to the twentieth century. I can see Hitler somewhere in Hell counting each murder in the streets as part of his posthumous score. The Vandals, Robert, are back.’

Du Pré lay against a stone column and smoked a cigarette. 'But they'll go too,' he said calmly. 'You said yourself—the Phoenicians and the Romans and the Arabs and the Berbers all came and went. The idea remains.'

'Perhaps they'll go—perhaps,' said Hassid, raising himself laboriously to his feet. 'I wonder if I'll see them go.'

Du Pré gave him a rapid glance, and leapt down from the marble base in order to help him.

'Of course you will. I'm certain it won't be long now.'

'Before what?'

'Before the OAS is smashed. They can't win.'

'Why not?'

'Because,' said du Pré with a frown against the sun, 'I don't really believe we live in an age of nihilism. There are too many people who still have faith.'

'Faith,' said Hassid. 'I sometimes find it hard to have faith. For the last few days I've been caring for a child blown up by a grenade. The child will probably die. Its death will have been arbitrary and purposeless—a microcosm of all our experience. Why should I have faith?'

'For God's purpose—of which we are instruments.'

Hassid took du Pré's arm as they walked in silence to the hotel down the rocky hill path between the olive-trees and the yellow ginestra.

'You mustn't take me too seriously,' he said at last. 'I'm an unpersuaded rationalist.'

'Unpersuaded?'

'Yes. On the one hand, I belong to the scientists in search of proof—on the other, to the Jews who live by miracles. On balance, I'm on the side of the Jews.'

'Isaiah?'

'Isaiah and St. Paul. . . . "I delight in the law of God according to the inward man—but I behold another law in my limbs which wars against the law of my mind."'

'Yes,' said du Pré, his face solemn as he looked down

towards the hotel. 'Isn't that our human situation? The situation of all of us?'

Eliane came into view near the avenue of eucalyptus-trees where a group of Arabs were squatting by the roadside.

'What about a drink before we swim?' she called out.

*

At the horns of the beach, the sea sucked at the rocks. In rows under the colonnaded parasols, the sunbathers lay somnolent in the midday heat, ignoring the old Arab with the iced lemonade and his cry of 'Fresh! Fresh!' The water stabbed its glitter in the eyes. 'Shall we swim now?' du Pré asked Eliane.

She turned from a quartet of sunbathers, propped on their elbows, who, watching her approach, had disposed themselves in elegant, ephebic postures.

'I—' she began, '—it's absurd. I can't stand all these people piled on top of each other.'

'They're very graceful—the sun makes everything beautiful.'

'No,' said Eliane. 'They're ugly. Let's not swim.'

She spoke urgently, as if overtaken by panic, and du Pré, surprised, said,

'I don't mind a bit. Why don't we walk in the hills?'

Eliane, twirling her bathing-costume, said,

'I'm sorry, Robert. You swim, and I'll wait for you on the terrace.'

'I wouldn't dream of it,' said du Pré. 'I hate sunbathing, anyhow. It's clinical and uncomfortable.'

'I don't believe a word you say,' Eliane replied walking carefully between the bronzed figures on the beach. 'But it's sweet of you. Why do people want to fry themselves in scented olive oil? They ought to be laid out on marble slabs like fish or in the sarcophagi.'

Though she spoke lightly, her eyes, still possessed of a private fear, were averted from his. She took his arm, and drew

him away from the beach towards the stairway leading to the Forum which the rains earlier in the week had flushed with wild flowers—cyclamen and iris, salvia and geranium, spilling over the ruined architraves in a scarlet fringe. Within minutes they were looking down on the port with its lighthouse, and the villas, interspersed with cypress trees, glistening beneath them like blank dice.

They were alone on the path, and when they halted at a marble balustrade in an alcove of bushes overlooking the sea, Tipaza seemed a Pompeian suburb, petrified in silence except for the girring of invisible cicadas.

'If you look right down,' said Eliane, 'it's as if you're taking off in an aeroplane.'

'Do you miss Paris?' said du Pré, reading her pensive expression.

'Yes,' she answered quickly. 'I'm frightened in Algeria—I don't mean for myself. I'm frightened at the way people get brutalized and indifferent. I'm frightened because of all the children who no longer go to school and see dead men lying in the street. I'm frightened at all the terrible things that are done in the name of goodness. Does that surprise you?' •

'No,' said du Pré. 'It would surprise me if you felt differently.'

'And yet,' Eliane went on, 'I love Algeria. I was born here. So were my father and my grandfather. You can read our names all over the place—in a dozen cemeteries. I can understand why people will fight to the death for it.'

'You mean the French?'

'The Moslems too. If I were an Arab, I'd belong to the FLN.'

She said it defiantly, but du Pré remained impassive.

'And as a Frenchwoman—a French Algerian?'

'I believe we all have the right to live here. Why should the rights of one community exclude the rights of others?'

'And if the Evian Conference brings a cease-fire—what would you do?'

'I'd support it. I campaigned for Mendès-France because that's what he wanted. And I'll support de Gaulle—if he carries out a Mendès policy even without Mendès. I think it's what the whole of France is yearning for.'

She turned to face du Pré, and her face became animated as she spoke.

'I don't believe,' she went on, 'that the toughs of the Legion are the real France. The leather jackets and the thick-soled shoes—the back-room torturers—they're importations.'

'But they found a willing market?'

'Yes,' said Eliane, lowering her dark eyelashes. 'I imagine there's something in all of us that opens its arms to evil.'

'What about your husband?' Du Pré asked.

'Walter? He's very uncomplicated. He loathes politics, believes in French Algeria—and accepts whatever happens with a sort of contempt. I suppose it's because he's a businessman who believes in making the best of every deal.'

'But he served in the army?'

'I think he was happiest then. He likes order and obedience—predictability with an occasional challenge of danger.'

'Does he hunt?' du Pré asked idly.

'He used to shoot boar in the Vosges during the season. He's a very good shot,' Eliane said. Then she interrupted herself and said, 'Why are we talking about Walter? I'm sure he's having a wonderful time somewhere in Paris. Let's go on a bit, and start back for lunch in about half an hour.'

The pathway skirting the hill had become steeper, and Eliane took du Pré's bare arm beneath the linen jacket which he carried over it.

'I hope Walter's having a good time in Paris,' she said, recurring to the subject of her husband. 'Because at this moment I'm enjoying myself in Tipaza.'

She spoke simply and her face, turned to the sun and sky, mirrored her delight in the scented spring air.

'If only Daddy would give up work and come and live here—away from those awful wailing ambulances!'

'I think you'd have to chloroform him to get him to abandon his hospital and clinic,' said du Pré with a laugh. 'Your father's as tough as any leather-jacket in Bab-el-Oued.'

Eliane stopped walking, and her brow furrowed.

'Is anything wrong?' du Pré asked in concern.

'Yes,' she answered, 'there is.'

She had lowered her head, and du Pré put his hand under her chin to raise it.

'What is it, Eliane?'

She looked at him steadily and replied,

'It's Daddy. I'm so worried about him. The other night at the Opera House—'

She stopped, and du Pré said encouragingly, 'Well?'

'He got a threatening note from the OAS.'

Du Pré listened attentively as she described how her father had received the piece of paper with the inscription '*Traditor*'. When she finished, he smiled and said,

'I shouldn't worry about that. It's routine. It isn't a threat. It's a caveat. Almost everybody gets one when they arrive at Maison Blanche. They're given away with the police cards.'

Eliane's face slowly broke into a smile that matched his.

'Did you get one?'

'No,' said du Pré. 'They probably missed me out because I had a doomed look anyway. That's exactly what my concierge at the hotel said. She's a witch, you know.'

Eliane's face became serious again.

'Don't joke,' she said, and she took his hands in hers. 'I want you to promise me something.'

'What?'

'No—promise me, and I'll tell you.'

'All right—I promise.'

'Promise you'll take care—be careful when you go about in Algiers.'

Du Pré closed his hands over hers, and said,
'I promise.'

'And that you won't wander in the streets after nine o'clock.'

'I promise . . . and will you promise me something too?'

'Tell me what it is first.'

Du Pré laughed out loud, and said,

'All right—promise me not to worry about your father. No one will harm him—neither the FLN nor the OAS. With your father's reputation, they'd lose more by attacking him than if they lost a hundred men.'

Eliane looked up at him gratefully.

'Do you mean it?'

'I mean it,' said du Pré. 'They'll insult him. They won't touch him.'

'Thank you,' said Eliane. She pressed his hand, and said,

'Let's go down. Daddy gets hungry and very testy at about this time.'

*

Far into the afternoon they lay languidly in deck-chairs near the rampart at the edge of the open-air restaurant. Hassid slept with his mouth half-open, his fingers still clutching the *Echo d'Oran*. The air beneath the sheltering trees was still, and the sea a dead calm, in which the boats, forbidden to sail because of reports of illegal traffic, lay in disciplined berths, lifeless, painted into the seascape in red and white. Eliane and du Pré, stretched out side by side, spoke desultorily about Paris and their lives there.

'Did you go out much?' Eliane asked.

'Socially?'

'Yes.'

Du Pré reflected.

'Not a great deal.'

'Did you spend a lot of time with your children?'

'Less than I wanted to—there was the war—Indo-China—'

'I feel as if we've always been at war.'

'And then my job has always taken me away.'

'As a civil servant?'

'Yes, and before that as a journalist.'

She looked upwards as a fat, deciduous leaf floated slowly down, and fell onto her skirt. Du Pré reached across her lap and picked up the leaf.

'Impregnation—obsession—hallucination,' he said irrelevantly.

'What's that?' Eliane asked. 'It's vaguely familiar.'

'It's Braque's aphorism about art. You look at something, then you become absorbed by it, then it becomes an obsession, then you see it as something entirely different—the hallucination you create.'

'It reminds me,' said Eliane, 'of the mint pastilles they sell in Algiers cinemas with the words "I like you", "I love you", "I love you madly", and "I love you hopelessly". Teenagers exchange them like letters.'

'Is it like that?' said du Pré, ignoring her banter. He still held the leaf in his hand and twisted it by its stem. 'Just look at this green leaf. It's brown and yellow and golden.'

Eliane leaned over to examine it, and du Pré smelt the sun as it touched her hair.

'If you stare at it, it becomes something different—hypnotic—not a leaf but something indescribably complex and absorbing.'

She was no longer looking at the leaf, and for a few moments their eyes met solemnly.

Hassid stirred, and his newspaper fell to the ground.

'What time is it?' he asked. 'How long was I asleep?'

'It's getting late,' said du Pré. 'I think we'd better be getting back.'

Although the sun still dominated the sky, the moon was visible low on the horizon and the evening birds had begun to sing in the cypress groves.

'However bright the sun may shine, the time must come, the

sun must set,' Hassid quoted. He sighed, and added, 'Let's go back to the city.'

Du Pré picked up Eliane's beach-bag, and the three of them walked in silence through the garden where the yellow roses mingled their scent with the bitter smell of the fig-trees.

*

The flat was in darkness when they arrived. Eliane led the way, saying, 'Francesca goes home on Saturdays, so you'll have to put up with me . . . I never can find the switch in the hall!' She fumbled towards the drawing-room with du Pré and Hassid close behind her. They were tired from the journey which had ended in a series of long traffic-blocks, accompanied by irritable insults from drivers who had been eager to return before the purplish dusk had turned to night. Hassid hung his Panama hat on a peg, and Eliane began to sing as she groped for the handle of the drawing-room door. On the road through Castiglione, lined with almond-trees in flower, they had sung together a popular song called 'Primavera'. It was a gay waltz with a change to a minor key for two or three bars followed by an optimistic return into G major. The *yaouleds* whistled it as they polished their customers' shoes, and its tune spilled out from the radio in every tenement. Eliane sang, 'Primavera, primavera', in her light soprano voice, and du Pré joined in, feeling with his hand for the switch, till it enclosed hers and pressed the room into light.

'Hullo, hullo,' said de Croissillon, rising from his armchair. 'This is the perfect greeting—music and light.'

Eliane hesitated, then went up to him with a smile and kissed him warmly on the cheek.

'Darling—when did you get back?'

De Croissillon shook hands with du Pré.

'Didn't you get my telegram?' he asked.

'There's been no one here all day,' said Eliane. 'They probably telephoned it through. Guess where we've been?'

'I don't know,' said de Croissillon. 'Have a whisky, du Pré. You both look very well. Sunburnt—blooming—sensationally well, as Christine might say. You haven't asked me about the children, Eliane.'

'Give me a chance,' said Eliane. 'I want to do my hair, and then I'm going to ask you everything in detail. How are they?'

'Do your hair first,' said de Croissillon. His smile had disappeared, and he poured a measure of Perrier water into the whisky which he handed to du Pré.

'How's Paris looking?' du Pré asked calmly when Eliane had left them and he could hear her talking to her father in another part of the flat. He sat relaxed, comparing his own sports jacket with de Croissillon's formal grey suit.

'It's another world,' said de Croissillon. His irises seemed to redden. 'But not a better one.'

'What are they talking about?'

'They're very concerned with whether some princess or other is going to have a baby. Otherwise, they're only thinking of their summer holidays.'

'It's strange to think that not long ago they were coming to North Africa for their holidays. We were at Tipaza today.'

'Good,' said de Croissillon as if approving his candour. 'Did you swim? The old man likes the ruins. What did you do for transport? Does the G.G. give you a car?'

'I get a Pool car when I want one,' said du Pré. 'But today I must confess we used your Citroën.'

'Delighted, my dear fellow,' said de Croissillon, rising. 'Come on—have another whisky . . . So long as you don't mind the risk of being mistaken for me. That car is very distinctive, you know.'

Du Pré declined the glass which de Croissillon was holding out to him, and said,

'The only way to live in Algiers is by fatalism or faith.'

'Courage?'

'Up to a point—but there are times when that doesn't help.'

'That's true,' said de Croissillon, turning on the radio, then almost immediately turning it off. 'It doesn't need courage to get a bullet in your back when you're not looking . . . Well, never mind that. How're the reports coming along?'

'They're just routine,' said du Pré. 'Very dull stuff.'

'And what do you do for amusement?'

'Amusement? . . . Pretty well nothing. I have a few friends——'

'You must try La Douéra. It's on the other side of El Biar. They start pretty early, but if you want to you can get a room for the night. And they've got some pretty hostesses.'

Eliane returned with the coffee, accompanied by Dr Hassid who carried the cups.

'Well,' said Hassid jovially, 'tell me all about the grandchildren.'

'I spoke to them,' said de Croissillon. 'They told me they're well-behaved and are going to Communion regularly.'

Hassid's expression didn't change.

'Christine must be a big girl,' he said.

'Did they like the presents?' Eliane asked.

'I don't know,' said de Croissillon. 'I only spoke to them on the telephone, and I sent the presents on.'

'Oh,' said Eliane, 'how disappointing!'

De Croissillon looked at her sharply, and said,

'I was in Paris for business—not for fun.'

He stood and drained his glass of whisky.

'I leave the fun department to you.'

Eliane flushed, and said to du Pré,

'Would you like another cup of coffee?'

'Thank you so much,' said du Pré in a level voice. 'I will.'

'I have to be up early tomorrow,' said de Croissillon, squaring his shoulders inside his jacket. 'Good night to you all.'

When the door closed behind him, Hassid said,

'He's worn-out, poor fellow. Air travel's an unnatural form of locomotion. Very tiring!'

Du Pré watched Eliane's face from which the delight had gradually faded. Her father had begun to reminisce.

'I remember,' he was saying, 'that before the war—the First World War—there were several private museums in Cherchell of very great interest. There was one in particular—it was outside the Western Gate on the Tenès road—belonged to a retired officer, Major Archipied or something.'

'Archambeau,' said Eliane, who had often heard the story.

'That's it—Archambeau. When I was a boy, he used to show me all the bits and pieces he'd found on his own property—they all had something to do with burial rites—vases, lamps, mosaics, tear-bottles and that sort of thing. I imagine he built his villa in a Roman cemetery.'

While he spoke, Eliane and du Pré looked at each other, at first questioningly and then with recognition. She smiled to him as he rose to go.

'You won't forget the lecture in botany?'

'No—I'll telephone—I'll confirm it. It's just a little difficult to plan ahead.'

Hassid shook his hand.

'How will you get back? Would you like to stay the night? We can find you a bed.'

'Yes,' said Eliane hesitantly. 'Yes—why not?'

Du Pré glanced quickly towards the bedroom where de Croissillon could be heard closing doors.

'I don't think so,' he said. 'Thank you so much. I've developed a perfect technique for getting about Algiers at night. I walk fast and recite Apollinaire.'

*

When Eliane came into the bedroom, de Croissillon was standing still fully dressed by the curtains. He was smoking a cigarette, and watched her in silence as she removed her necklace at the dressing-table and began to brush her hair.

'Well?' he asked. 'Don't you speak to your husband?'

She put down her brushes, and tugged with her comb at a tangle in her hair.

'Yes,' she said, 'but only if he speaks to me politely.'

He put out his cigarette, walked across to where she was sitting, and put his hands on her shoulders.

'I'm sorry,' he said. 'I'm sorry if I sounded abrupt. I specially got the earlier plane to see you sooner. I was disappointed not to find you.'

She looked at him in the mirror as he bent over her, and suddenly she turned her face affectionately towards him.

'I couldn't just sit in the flat. Could I? You move about. But it's so suffocating being here all the time. Tipaza was like—like breathing. Didn't you feel that in Paris?'

'No,' said de Croissillon. 'It's easier to breathe in Algiers than in Paris. There it's all gone sour—de Gaulle playing at being a monarch with a court of bankers. The whole thing's flashy and fake. The Fourth Republic rotted. This one's decomposing.'

She stood, and put her arms around him and laughed.

'You're an old reactionary.'

'That's it,' said de Croissillon, kissing her forehead. 'I'm an old reactionary who's sick of defeatists and people who say "Yes" to de Gaulle and a cease-fire.'

'What do you want?'

'Our rights.'

'And what about theirs?'

De Croissillon released her impatiently.

'That's really what I mean. You—and that gang in Paris——'

'What gang?'

'The whole lot from the G.P. to *Le Figaro* with Mendès-France in between—you're so busy seeing the Arab point of view, you've got no time for the French.'

Eliane shrugged her shoulders, and de Croissillon came behind and helped to unzip her dress.

'What do you make of du Pré?' he asked.

'Du Pré?' she said, seeking time to formulate her thoughts. 'He's very nice. He seems to get on very well with Daddy.'

'Did you swim this afternoon?'

'No.'

Their conversation paused as she continued to undress. De Croissillon removed his jacket, and carefully hung it in the wardrobe.

'You look very beautiful,' he said.

'I'm glad,' she answered, sitting on the bed to take off her stockings. 'It's all that sun. It makes everything look beautiful—almost everything.'

'He's a curious fellow,' said de Croissillon. 'I still can't understand why they should send a man from Paris to report on monuments and museums at this stage of the game. Whoever decides on it, it won't be the Ministry of Culture. Does he ever talk about his work?'

'Hardly ever,' said Eliane. 'Give me my dressing-gown . . . But he's very interesting when he talks about pictures.'

'What does he know about pictures?' said de Croissillon going to get her dressing-gown from the other side of the room.

Eliane stretched herself, watching the ripple of her flanks and the firm rise of her breasts in the looking-glass.

'He was on the *Figaro Littéraire* for some years after he came out of the army,' she said. 'I believe he wrote a book on Daumier.'

'He's a curious fellow,' de Croissillon repeated. 'There's something about him I don't quite go for.'

'You don't have to.'

De Croissillon was standing close to her so that she could feel the roughness of his clothes against her naked body as, standing in front of her, he spread the dressing-gown around her shoulders.

She looked up at him and said, 'No.'

De Croissillon pressed her against the bed till its edge touched the back of her knees.

‘No,’ she said again.

‘Yes,’ said de Croissillon with his mouth near hers. She fell back on the bed and tried to twist her mouth away from his but her shoulders touched the sheets, and his forearm lay across her chest.

‘No,’ she said.

‘Yes,’ said de Croissillon. ‘Yes.’

He was kicking off his shoes, and in an old habit she received his weight, their bodies clinging together as they observed each other with eyes open like enemies.

CHAPTER VI

As soon as Dr. Hassid entered the auditorium, the uproar of conversation died away. Following his usual practice, he stood at the door surveying the class before walking in a measured step to the desk. One of his students, Vedoni, used to imitate his walk before lectures began. In a parody of professorial arrogance, he would strut from the benches to the lectern, and raise a guffaw by delivering a few elaborate sentences in the Hassid manner. If the professor arrived before the buffoonery was over, his pupils would compose themselves respectfully while he made some well-tempered observations on the impossibility of Vedoni completing his course as long as he was sunk in 'the childishness which was dogging him so late into life'. The reproachful sentence was always the same, and the class used to repeat the words in a collective chant as Hassid pronounced his judgment. Vedoni, a leader of the Algiers Union of Students, would rise with mock humility and say, 'I beg your pardon, Professor. I was only practising for the time when I might be called by destiny and my talents to take over your Chair in Neuro-Surgery.'

And while the class laughed, Hassid would reply,

'Perhaps, Mr. Vedoni, we can return to the question when you have passed your examination in elementary physiology.'

Hassid stood at the door and surveyed the men and women students in the amphitheatre. He always attracted a large audience, but he could rarely remember the Salle Clemenceau holding so many. Apart from those who sat close-packed in shirt-sleeves and summer cottons on the benches that rose in tiers to the back, there were students squatting, lolling and propped-up against the walls and steps. In a swift glance,

Hassid saw that there were many present whom he had never seen before. They observed his entrance with a calm indifference.

The pain in Hassid's sciatic nerve had become an acute, scalding sensation which moved in flaming ribbons down his legs each time he put his foot on the ground. Eliane had urged him to spend the day in bed, but he hadn't wished to disappoint his pupils, since although some of the classes had been suspended because of the explosions in the University, his own course, necessary for certain medical students to complete their final examinations, was among the few which remained open.

The walk from the floor to the podium under several hundred eyes had always been a trial which, since his earliest days as a lecturer, he had coped with by slowing down his pace to the now characteristic Hassid shuffle. Today, the ten yards were going to be an added torture. Hassid paused to rest his leg, studied the familiar faces dispersed among the strangers, took off his glasses to clean the thick lenses, and, holding his notes, moved slowly to the desk.

He put the papers down, waiting for the students to rise. Instead, they looked back at him with a fixed and sullen expression. The blinds had been drawn against the brilliant spring sunshine, but the light through the glazed windows in the roof touched the top of each head, isolating the faces in a personal response to Hassid. His eyes rested on Emile Boudac, one of his most successful students, and he said, 'I observe, M. Boudac, that the class is somewhat tired today.'

Boudac lowered his gaze to the pencil he was holding in his hand, and didn't answer.

Hassid turned to his neighbour.

'Mlle Jeanneray—can you explain why the class today has become immobilized?'

She didn't reply, and Hassid, with another glance at the watchful, silent faces, said,

'I'm sorry that my class has abandoned the excellent tradition of rising to greet the lecturer. Its purpose has always been

to show respect for science. I'm sorry—yes, very sorry that you have given it up. Let me see.'

He turned over his papers and noticed angrily that his hands were shaking. One sheet fluttered downwards from the dais and fell at the feet of Vedoni, who was sitting on the extreme edge of the benches to the right of Hassid. He didn't stir. Hassid waited for one of the others to pick up the paper. No one moved till Mlle Jeanneray half-rose as if to return it to him. Vedoni said sharply, 'No', his straight black eyebrows closing over his thin nose.

Hassid walked from his dais in the silence, and bent to recover his notes. His face became suffused with the exertion, and the eyes of the class dropped on to the bald crown of his head as he scrabbled on the floor.

For the last few months, the Moslem and European students had spontaneously separated themselves at his lectures. The Moslems took the seats at the back and the Europeans filled the first six rows in front of them. Occasionally there had been brawls by the fountain in front of the University near the palm-lined entrance. But inside the laboratories and lecture-rooms there had always been a truce as if the neutrality of science superseded political passion. The European members of the Faculty were almost all supporters of a French Algeria. Vedoni, as a leader of the Students' Association, had taken a prominent part in every one of the Forum demonstrations against a negotiated peace. He had served in the Third Squadron of the Third Regiment of Dragoons, been taken prisoner in an engagement with the FLN at Aïn-Sefra, escaped and returned to his studies, which were more nominal than real since his work was concentrated on the political organization of the European students, with the authority of a man who had faced danger and come back. The white scar across his forehead seemed the evidence of his wounds although, in fact, it was the relic of a

fight in the Aiglou Bar over a girl during his first student year. When he walked through the corridors of the University and the streets of the city, he was always surrounded by a squad. Some were students, others were unattached and unemployed young men who dressed well, spent the afternoons playing with juke-boxes and in the evenings sat silently in the cafés as if waiting for instructions. The 1959 order from the Ministry of the Interior for Vedoni's expulsion for 'mischievous activities' had never been executed. The Rector and senior members of the Faculty had signed an open letter protesting against the Minister's interference with academic freedom, and saying that the right to express unpopular views was an inalienable right in a democracy, guaranteed by a century-old tradition in France. They treated Vedoni with servility, and he responded with contempt. When he demanded that the medical course should be suspended for a week as a protest against the arrest of Dr. Arnoul, a leading member of the OAS in Constantine, the University authorities hurried to comply. He himself was on easy terms with senior army officers. He had the prestige among his fellow-students of a killer. The only Professor of the Faculty to whom he showed an ironic respect was Hassid. It was a survival from his early years at the University when he had really wanted to study medicine, and Hassid had given him advice and help.

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As the Professor rose from the floor with his notes in his hand, his eyes met Vedoni's. For a fraction of a second they observed each other before Hassid's gaze moved to the Moslem faces at the rear of the class. They were neutral, uncommitted.

'Ladies and gentlemen,' Hassid began, 'I propose today to tell you about closed spinal injuries with incomplete paraplegia. As we saw in our last lecture—the unfamiliar faces of those who hadn't attended his last lecture stood out in the class—in compound spinal injuries, especially when they are due to gunshot and shell wounds, the main purpose of early operative

intervention is the removal of foreign bodies—especially when there is a leakage of cerebrospinal fluid with X-ray evidence of a foreign body within or in the neighbourhood of the spinal canal, and bacteriological evidence of infection of the cerebrospinal fluid. In such a case it is vital to remove the foreign body.’

He paused for breath, and sipped a glass of water on his desk. The students waited attentively for him to continue.

‘Now, let me illustrate this,’ he went on. ‘Three months ago, a soldier was admitted to the Mustapha Hospital fourteen days after being hit in the back by fragments of an 88 mm. shell which burst near him. He had a complete transverse lesion at T.11, with flaccid paraplegia. There was a wound measuring 4 by 2 cm. to the left of the tenth thoracic vertebra, discharging cerebrospinal fluid. Bacteriological examination showed infection with *Clostridia welchii*, haemolytic, streptococcus and coliform bacilli . . .’

He sensed a stir in the class, and lifted his head from his notes as Vedoni stood and gave a signal with his arm. Immediately there was a shuffling and stamping of feet as the whole class rose, and, without speaking, began to move towards the exits of the amphitheatre. A group of four young men forced their way from the throng to where Vedoni was standing.

Hassid folded his notes and watched silently the sudden disintegration of his class. The Moslem students at the back had hesitated, but under the eyes of Vedoni’s squad, they rose reluctantly and followed the stream. The doorways were jammed as if by a crowd leaving a play with the bored look of discontented patrons. Only a few turned back with a half-glance of curiosity at Hassid still holding the stage. Two of Vedoni’s faction moved purposefully towards the retreating students, and the clusters at the door broke up. Within five minutes, Vedoni and his supporters were alone with Hassid.

‘I assume,’ said Hassid, ‘that you instigated this demonstration.’

'The demonstration,' Vedoni replied, 'was spontaneous. We merely disciplined it.'

'I don't understand its purpose,' said Hassid. A red-hot poker seemed to be lying on the outside of his leg, but he controlled the grimace that came to his mouth, because he thought that Vedoni might misconstrue it as fear. The student leader now confronted him, while the four others stood around, preventing him from moving to the door. The two in black leather jackets kept their hands in their pockets, moving lightly from one hip to another like boxers. The others, dressed in elegant grey suits, had the restrained manners of plain-clothes policemen.

'Its purpose,' said Vedoni, 'is quite simple. It's to give you notice, Dr. Hassid, that we're not going to let you put your skill as a doctor at the service of the FLN.'

Hassid looked up sharply.

'The FLN?' he said. 'My talents aren't at the service of the FLN. I'm a doctor. I serve the sick. That's all there is to it. Now please let me pass.'

'Not yet, Dr. Hassid,' Vedoni said. 'We——'

'Who are "we"?''

'We,' Vedoni said calmly, 'are patriots. We object to your preserving the lives of men who are killers. In your spinal ward, you have eight FLN——'

'I don't ask the politics of my patients,' Hassid said firmly. 'I do what I can—God knows it can't be much—for everyone brought into my wards.'

'We believe you harbour them.'

'No.'

'That you have given them medical supplies and care.'

'No—it isn't true.'

'That you've given sanctuary to *fellouze* at your clinic at Bel Air.'

'I only receive men and women who are sick.'

'And that only five days ago, you personally brought a Moslem into the Mustapha.'

'That's true . . . the Moslem was an eight-year-old child—paralysed—with infected wounds . . . Come, gentlemen. I have nothing more to say to you.'

Vedoni straightened himself till his eyes were on a level with the doctor's.

'We have something more to say to you, Dr. Hassid. We give you three days to clear your beds of FLN wounded at the Mustapha.'

'That's impossible—I told you—I don't ask if my patients are FLN or OAS or neither. They can't be moved.'

'In that case,' said Vedoni, 'we'll move them for you by tomorrow night.'

'And if I refuse to let you?'

'That will make everything a lot easier,' said Vedoni. 'But we must warn you, Dr. Hassid—we're not going to stand for any more of your communication with the FLN . . . That's all there is to it . . . You can go.'

The young men stood aside, and Hassid hobbled to the door. Vedoni's dismissive words had quickened his breathing. He felt their specific insolence more acutely than he did the general insult by the class. He remembered his hands in chains when Giraud sent him to a concentration camp in the Sahara, and the recollection made his shoulders hunch. Then the feeling of outrage was replaced by one of anger and defiance. He paused at the door, and waited for Vedoni to approach. When he reached him, Hassid said,

'There is something I ought to tell you, Vedoni. I am an old man and you are a young one. I have now not very much to lose. My life is already spent, and if you or your friends shorten it by a few years——' He shrugged his shoulders without finishing his sentence. 'But while I live, I shall live my life by my own standards of what is right. You've asked me to fail in my duties as a doctor—to join with the killers—to kill by default. My answer is "No".'

He turned, and the pain in his leg seemed to ebb away. In

the courtyard the dispersed groups of students, waiting for Vedoni to appear, watched in surprise as Dr. Hassid went humming tunelessly on his way to get his car.

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With the confused impressions of his abortive lecture still in his mind, he drove straight to the Mustapha Hospital. The threat to his patients had been precise. Only a week before two Moslems had been abducted from their beds by OAS men, and more than ten Europeans, nominally under police surveillance, had been carried from the wards by an OAS escort. There was no longer safety or security in the local police. They had become the apathetic accomplices of anarchy. Hassid nodded to the two policemen who saluted him at the gates of the hospital. He couldn't blame them. Their individual sense of duty had been swamped by the tide of public irresponsibility. Hassid shook his head to himself. It was the mark of a civilized society, he thought, that there was someone to appeal to. The sterile wards, the immaculate corridors, the clerks, the nurses, the porters—all were as they had always been. They were the product of a sophisticated, highly developed culture. The hospital itself was a complex piece of machinery designed to serve an orderly community. Its purpose was to repair the injured bodies, to ease pain, to save men and women from the ravages of a hostile nature. Nurses took temperatures, pathologists examined tissues, surgeons excised and pharmacists prepared drugs. And yet, as fast as the healers worked, the killers each day added to the sum of pain and mourning. There was no longer even chivalry for the sick. Men had been murdered in their hospital beds.

The sister rose from her chair as he entered the spinal ward, and Dr. Lagny, his young assistant, hurried over to greet him. Hassid shook hands and said, 'Everything well?'

Lagny gave him a report, and added,

'But I'm concerned about the child—I think there's a urinary infection.'

'Is the catheterization normal?'

'Yes.'

'You change his position as I told you?'

'Every three hours.'

'Let's see,' said Hassid.

They walked in a small procession, consisting of themselves, an assistant, two nurses and the sister, between the closely spaced beds. The paralysed patients followed Hassid with their gaze, seeking reassurance or a particular comfort from his presence. To each Hassid gave a smile or a friendly word. In his white coat, tall though slightly stooping amid his staff, he gave them security, and where he passed the mood of listless apathy changed into hope.

For a whole minute he stood at the top of the bed contemplating Salem. A black curl lay in a damp strand on the boy's brow, and he was asleep, breathing deeply. Except for his flushed cheekbones, his face was ivory white. When at last he opened his eyes and saw himself surrounded, he began to cry.

Hassid sent the others away, and sat on a chair by the bedside.

'Well, Salem,' he said, taking the small hand in his own. The boy turned his face in the pillow, and didn't answer.

'Come on,' the doctor said, speaking in Arabic. 'I'm here to make you better.'

The boy jerked his head, and pressed his face still harder into the pillow.

'Don't you want me to tell you about Ahmed Hakim?' the doctor went on.

The boy slowly turned his head at the mention of the famous Algerian footballer, and looked at Hassid doubtfully through his thick eyelashes.

'Do you know Ahmed?' he said slowly.

'He is my very best friend,' the doctor said, with the mental reservation that he was lying to good purpose.

Salem smiled slowly, and then seemed to ponder.

'Tell me about him,' he said at last.

Hassid took off his glasses and cleaned them while he considered his new intimacy with the footballer.

'Well,' he said, 'Ahmed tells me that he won't be playing next week in the Oran Cup.'

'Why?' asked the boy.

'He broke his leg playing in the trials.'

Salem reflected, and said,

'I can't move my legs.'

The doctor stroked the hair from the boy's forehead and said,

'Can you shoot with a bow and arrow?'

'No,' he answered.

'I'll teach you,' said Hassid, 'when you're better.'

'I like football,' Salem replied.

'Does anything hurt you?'

'No,' said the boy. 'It doesn't hurt.'

'Has your mother—your father—been to see you?'

'My father's a soldier—he's away.'

'And your mother?'

The boy began to cry again, and Hassid said,

'Ahmed wouldn't cry.'

Salem stopped at once.

'When Ahmed gets hurt, he just laughs.'

'He laughs?'

'Yes.'

The boy began to smile.

'That's right. Like that . . . I'll see you soon.'

'Tomorrow?' the boy asked, clinging to his hand.

'Yes—tomorrow.'

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On his way out Hassid met Si Cada, who was leaving the Ornano di Colonna Medical Ward. For a moment their joint instinct was to greet each other and then move on. But they were detained by a sense of self-respect which Hassid made articulate.

'I don't see why they should stop us talking to each other,' he said. 'We've been friends for thirty years.'

Si Cada said, 'I am a Moslem. I believe our destiny lies with God.'

The nurses and doctors hurried past them as they chatted in the green marbled lobby. Si Cada lowered his voice to a whisper.

'You should leave Algiers.'

Hassid shook his head slowly.

'No, never. I will never leave Algiers.'

Si Cada repeated, 'You should leave Algiers.'

'I will never leave Algiers,' Hassid said in a firm voice, and Si Cada looked hurriedly over his shoulder. 'But I need your advice.'

'What is it?'

'The paraplegic boy—Salem.'

Si Cada shook his head.

'His mother died—the hospitals in the Casbah are insanitary—but they'd rather die there than come to the Mustapha.'

'I want to have him taken to Bel Air.'

Si Cada said quickly,

'It's too difficult. They would——'

'I want an ambulance with a Moslem crew. I want the destination to be marked as Ain-Tel—and then I want the boy to be taken to Bel Air.'

'Why?'

'Because if he isn't taken there, he'll die here.'

'It's very dangerous—I mean for you.'

'We'll see,' said Hassid. 'We'll see.'

'You'll have to sign the discharge form.'

'Yes—I'll do that.'

'I'll arrange for it tomorrow morning.'

'No—for tonight. Say seven o'clock.'

The two old men shook hands as if after taking an apéritif, and left each other with a contented smile lingering on their faces.

CHAPTER VII

THE two outriders halted their motor-cycles at the intersection of the road leading from the Route Nationale to the isolated villas in the hills above Charchell. Although they had ridden with a military precision, they wore civilian clothes, and now rested over the handlebars, looking seawards and along the road they had traversed as if they were tourists. 'Ten to seven,' said one; 'Yes,' said the other; then they became silent. Behind them, Les Glycines with its Moorish architecture and red gables stood out among the myrtle and cypress-trees, an impressive celebration of its proprietor's wealth.

De Sigle owned two newspapers, three skyscrapers and six thousand hectares of land. Before the Second World War he had appointed Prefects and hired Deputies. Since the Algerian war he had gradually transferred a large part of his holdings to France. He had become a tolerated absentee who engaged in politics by proxy. In principle, he was dedicated to the idea of French Algeria. But as he put it, 'A businessman must be a realist.' He had entered into talks with Moslem notables about a negotiated peace long before the Evian discussions. He had given subsidies to anti-FLN dissidents who were, in fact, more nationalistic than Ben Bella. He had himself held office in Gaullist associations, but he ostentatiously resigned from the Algerian bodies after the President began to talk of a cease-fire. He was now, as he put it, 'Not of the OAS, but with the OAS.'

When de Sigle entertained at Les Glycines, he never failed to revive the splendours of the great proconsular years. The gendarmerie stood by; senior officers arrived with pennants flying; and when night fell, the floodlit villa floated in the black hills like a heavenly suburb.

In Charchell there had been a rumour for days that de Sigle had returned from France, and was about to give a large dinner, but no one could confirm it. Food had been sent up in quantities to the villa which had been closed throughout the winter, although the Moslem kitchen staff hadn't been reinstated. The Arab gardeners had been dismissed, and instead an entirely new staff of Europeans, aloof and bored, who sometimes drank at the Allegro Bar in the town, had taken possession of its thirty rooms.

At seven o'clock exactly the two outriders started up their engines as a large Mercedes-Benz, travelling very fast, came into view at the loop in the coastal road. With a short run, the motor-cyclists swung themselves into the pace of the limousine, leading the way to the wistaria-covered villa. Three Citroëns, loaded with men, followed at intervals of ten yards. They moaned up the hillside in low gear through the open, wrought-iron gates at the entrance to the property, and up to the white steps where de Sigle, bald and neat in a double-breasted navy-blue suit, was waiting to greet his guests.

'Good evening, General,' he said to the hatless, sunburnt man who stepped out of the limousine almost before it had halted. They shook hands, and General Palice stood at his side as the other cars pulled up and with a slamming of doors emptied themselves of about a dozen men in civilian clothes.

'May I present my staff?' said the General. 'Verdier, Lanfroi, Duplessis, Caneua'—he stumbled over the names—'Juliani, Alport, Carbonnet, Fourbelas—and this is de Croissillon, whom you know—Vedoni, Joubert, Ortega.'

They shook hands with de Sigle, who asked if he could offer them a drink.

'Not yet,' said the General. 'I think we'd better transact our affairs first of all.'

He slapped impatiently at a mosquito which sang close to his wrist.

'I think,' he said, 'that I've fed half the mosquitoes of Asia and Africa.'

'Mine are domesticated,' said de Sigle, 'they come from the lily ponds.'

'I'm a great admirer of Marshal Lyautey,' said the General, turning his blue eyes, enlarged by his glasses, on his respectfully attentive staff. 'But I hold one thing against him. He was a great anglophile and he introduced the British bungalow into Indo-China from Singapore . . . How we suffered on those verandahs!'

'What was the alternative, sir?' Joubert, his aide-de-camp, asked.

'The multi-storey building—mosquitoes don't climb.'

— His staff laughed complaisantly, and de Sigle led the way over the tessellated floors of the villa to an inner patio opening on to the Mediterranean.

The General hesitated for a few seconds, studying the sky which had become flecked with mother-of-pearl tints, and merged with the pink-coloured sheen on the horizon of the sea. Then he brusquely motioned his staff to the gilt chairs which had been grouped round the table where he took his seat. Their host withdrew; the sentries stood at the entrances, and the General, flanked by Vedoni and Colonel Duplessis, made his introductory remarks.

'Gentlemen,' he said, with a rapid glance over his audience, 'the object of this conference is to give me the opportunity of offering you a political summary and to receive reports. You may smoke.'

He spoke in soft but incisive tones, and his hand was steady as he lit his cigarette.

'There can be no doubt,' he began, 'that the Evian discussions have encouraged a sense of lassitude in Metropolitan France. There, they are tired of the war—its cost in money and men; in any referendum, they will always vote "Yes" to indifference. We must face the fact that our own demonstrations

—the plastic bombs and so on—haven't had the effect in Paris we hoped for. The casualties proved a boomerang. The mass demonstrations against the bombing show that there isn't yet in France a climate of opinion in which our struggle can be appreciated.'

There was a murmur of agreement from the staff, and the General went on,

'But paradoxically enough—and Colonel de Croissillon will have his own report to make—there is a widespread approval in Metropolitan France of the OAS struggle here in *Algeria* . . . Where there isn't approval, there's at least sympathy. Does that suggest we should confine our demonstrations to Algeria?'

He watched the smoke of his cigarette rise, and answered his own question.

'No—I think not. In France where de Gaulle has dictatorially stifled our criticisms and his critics, our case mustn't go by default. Our activities there—whether they've come from Algeria or whether they belong to the generous youth of the lycées or St. Cyr—have got the duty of stirring the nation from its apathy. The plastic bomb is the maroon which alerts the nation to its danger. It's our way of voting "No" to de Gaulle—"no" to indifference, "no" to civic boredom. It's our way of warning traitors that the bullet will follow the firework. It's our way of talking to the masses.'

With a frown, he continued,

'De Gaulle will draw up his surrender terms for France. He will abandon Algeria to the *fellagha*. But he can't turn his paper settlements into reality unless he has the masses behind him. And that's where our strength lies. The OAS is the army of the people. It's the army of the streets—the army of youth. As long as the masses are with us, de Gaulle's settlement in Algeria is worth no more than Ben Khedda's signature. And you know what that's worth.'

He smiled, a smile of innocent charm which irradiated his face, and his officers smiled too.

‘Don’t despise the streets! Those streets with their French names are the places where Frenchmen far from their native villages have made themselves at home. They are the places where the FLN will find themselves forbidden. They are the bricks and mortar and flesh and blood of French Algeria.’

He paused and reflected for a few moments. Then he said musingly,

‘Climat-de-France! What love must have gone into that name! . . . But there are hundreds of villages and suburbs with names that breathe our homesickness for a France which is now here . . . I won’t dwell on it. You know it and understand it. This must be our order of the day. The war will go on. The FLN is still the enemy, even though for the time being our first enemy is the régime. The army and the OAS must remain one. The orders of the Matignon or of Rocher Noir must be made ineffective. And to do all this, we must put the fear of Hell into the enemy—Moslem or European.’

The ‘musts’ rose in a crescendo. He dropped his voice, and continued in tones of reflective analysis,

‘We must instil fear in two ways—first, by the selective execution of traitors . . . By definition, a traitor is anyone who opposes or thwarts the authority of the OAS . . . Second, by a general intimidation when there is need for mass action. For us, there is no other means of government. Our purpose must be to separate Algeria from de Gaulle, destroy his agents and tear the mask of passivity from the FLN so that the army recognizes that today’s FLN—the FLN whose leaders are drinking coffee with Joxe in Evian—is the same filthy enemy as the one that disembowelled pregnant women at Touggourt, slit the throats of our children at Gabès, shot innocent farmers, castrated them and burnt them alive at Tébessa . . . The same FLN as we’ve been fighting for over six years.’

The General’s voice again began to rise, but he controlled it.

‘The cease-fire, in short, can only be a phase in the war. From our intelligence reports, the Evian terms are at once a

surrender and a betrayal—not least of the Moslems, especially the Harkis. You saw the fraternization of May 13th. They came out and trusted us. It wasn't only the women who tore the veils from their faces. The men did too—the ones who had waited, the fence-sitters and the intimidated. They believed us because we had the strength to deserve belief. What will they have after Evian? They will have the same as our families in the *bled*—they'll have the knives, the iron bars, the bullets, the flaming petrol of the FLN.'

He put his lean hands on the table in front of him.

'No, gentlemen, the days to come will be a challenge. It will be a challenge as to which of us has the strongest nerves—which of us has the greatest faith—which of us will stick it out.'

He looked around at the intent faces, and said,

'We are all soldiers—but I think I am the oldest among you, the one who has served longest. There isn't a battlefield of France in the last forty years where either one or other of my close family hasn't fought and suffered. Today, they call me an ex-General in Paris. I am an ex-General today as de Gaulle ~~was~~ an ex-General under Pétain and I an ex-Colonel. I am under sentence of death for what they call my part in the insurrection . . . So you see—I have nothing to lose. But you—some of you have a great deal to lose. You must know that there are only two choices in our struggle—and one of them is victory.'

He sank into contemplation till one of the officers pushed a chair with a squeaking motion which roused him. Palice took the white handkerchief from his breast pocket and wiped his forehead.

'I think we'll now have the tactical report . . . Vedoni!' he said brusquely.

Vedoni uncrossed his legs, smoothed his narrow trousers, and said,

'Well, General, the report I have to give is a short one. The objective of the Government is to break the authority of the OAS by increasing the number of Republican Security Police

sent from France, while simultaneously disrupting our squads. The arms searches and the individual arrests have gone on. They've set up a new internment camp near Ouargla. And there are three new *barbouzes* headquarters at the Villa Saïda, the Villa Rouchard and the Villa du Parc. Fifteen hundred Security Police will arrive by sea from Marseilles or Oran on Friday. Colonel Kessler will take over command of the Constantine sub-region on the same day.'

'What were our losses during the past week?'

'Three killed on the road to Maison Blanche—eighteen arrested during the searches at Bab-el-Oued.'

'And their losses?'

'Eight Security Police in Oran—twelve *barbouzes* killed in the demolition of the Réjana—sixteen executions, including ten at the Social Centre.'

'And the rest?'

Vedoni passed his hand over his crew-cut black hair and said, 'In reprisals—eighty-seven were killed in Algiers, fifteen in ~~Oran~~, seven in Constantine, three in Bône.'

The General lowered his head, and asked without looking at Vedoni,

'What has the police reaction been to this?'

'The local police? Nil,' Vedoni said with a brushing-aside movement of his hand. 'The Security Police fired on three of our men at a road-block in Oran, wounding two.'

'And the Army?'

'The Army has preserved a rôle of decorous neutrality. We maintain, of course, a close liaison with the Army at all levels.'

'Who is our chief correspondent in the Algiers region?'

'Captain Peyron—he is an excellent man who supplies us with the movement orders. It is a great help during searches.'

'That's first-class.'

'In a sense, General, it is. But I'd like to put one or two thoughts to you—political ones if I may—on the situation as a whole.'

Palice nodded, and Vedoni, with a quick look at the others, said,

'You spoke before about the fence-sitters. You were right. They sit on the fence till they see where power lies. They have always been the biggest party in France. They are probably the biggest party in Algeria—among Frenchmen as well as Moslems. Don't let's delude ourselves. Many of the people who shout French Algeria loudest are secretly planning to skip off to France. We know it. They've been applying for air and sea tickets—trying to get visas—OAS visas—with all sorts of excuses. We've even had to deal with a few of them—Huhn and Langevin, for example—to discourage the others.'

He smiled as if to himself.

'There's a moral to all this, sir. Where there's apathy, there's weakness. That's the moment when disciplined men subdue the mob. It's true of "our" mob as it's true of "their" mob. The "mob" is a state of mind as much as anything else. De Gaulle knows it. You see, it's the moment he's been waiting for. When our people begin to trickle away, de Gaulle sends in his disciplined bodies—the Security Police, the *barbouzes*—and next it'll be the Army.'

Palice nodded his head in agreement as Vedoni started to emphasize his points with a thrusting finger.

'There comes a time,' he went on, 'when fear becomes a condition of life, and as with all conditions of life, men and women accommodate themselves to it—at any rate, till they die. They go mad, they become neurotic, they endure it—but they live with it. We've created fear in Algiers—we've been ready to be hated as long as we've been feared. But now the fear has become chronic. People are living with it. We need a new psychological shock which will transform the situation politically.'

'What do you propose?' de Croissillon asked calmly from his chair by a pillar. Other than Vedoni, he was the first of the staff to speak.

'I believe,' said Vedoni, 'that if terror is to succeed as a political weapon, it must exceed in terribleness anything that the enemy can offer.'

'You gave the balance sheet a minute ago,' said Lanfroi, a former civil servant at the Gouvernement Général who had been dismissed for his political activities. 'It's not bad.'

'It's not enough,' said Vedoni. 'Once upon a time you only had to call an Arab a son of a whore to start a fight. In the last few weeks, we've chopped down several hundreds of them—by mortar and pistols without any appreciable reaction. There's nothing doing. They won't fight. What we really need is to draw them into the European quarter of the city. We've got to provoke them into fighting. Then and only then will we be able to get a real mass French rising—a rising in which soldiers and civilians will fight side by side in the streets for France. It's no good dodging the issue. If ten Frenchmen a day are killed in Algiers they'll say "Too bad" in the Café du Commerce, and they'll turn to the racing results. What we need is a major clash—hundreds dead and dying so that the priests and journalists and shopkeepers will hear our soil crying for vengeance, and march on the Elysée and hang that Old Man from the nearest lamp-post.'

'And how do you propose that we do this?' Palice asked.

'We must provoke them.'

'How?'

'I want your agreement, first of all,' said Vedoni, 'to withdraw the order to our commandos against the execution of women.'

'Women?' the General interrupted sharply.

'Yes—women. I can tell you this, General—the whole of the FLN intelligence system is based on the information of Moslem women working and moving about in the European areas.'

'What's your suggestion?'

'I'm suggesting,' Vedoni said slowly, 'that the time has arrived for us to execute—demonstratively—a certain number of Moslem women.'

'Why not children?' de Croissillon asked ironically.

'That may have to come later,' Vedoni said coldly, turning his face fully to the questioner. 'There's a matter of detail that I'll have to discuss with you, Colonel. But for the moment I'm dealing with policy. In the past, the FLN have shot down and butchered and raped Frenchwomen by the score. We've retaliated by killing *fellouze*. What I suggest now is that anyone—Moslem, Jew or Christian—who gives aid or comfort to the FLN should be considered an enemy. That goes for women too. I have here a list of women informers. I'm asking your authority, General, for the Delta Commandos to dispose of them.'

He handed Palice a sheet of paper, and waited for his comments. The General put on his glasses to examine the list; then he threw it aside.

'I don't think so,' he said. 'Not yet at any rate.'

'Isabelle Morteuil,' said Vedoni, taking the paper up again. 'She was a secretary at the G.G. working in counter-intelligence. She arranged to meet Varin at a bar in the Rue d'Isly where he was kidnapped by *barbouzes*. When we blew up the Réjana, we found him impaled on a stake. What does she deserve?'

There was a growl of anger around the table.

'Here's another—Fatima Yazid,' Vedoni went on. 'She's been a grenade and message carrier for years. She handled the grenades that killed Bensusan and half his dance-band at Sidi-Ferruch. She was arrested and then released for lack of evidence. Our fellows have seen her in the Rue d'Isly. What do we do about her? . . . Djamila Batoudja—another bomb carrier. I can go on.'

'There's no point in it,' said the General. 'No—it's politically impossible.'

'If that's impossible,' said Vedoni, 'the whole policy laid down in Order No. 29 is impossible. What's the point of calling on the population to resist the Security Police and to make life hard for the Moslems if you make exceptions for FLN agents?'

'Don't you think, Vedoni,' said de Croissillon, 'that once we start killing women, we'll have the whole of world public opinion against us?'

'Public opinion!' Vedoni echoed. 'The only public opinion that has any importance for us is Algiers today—Paris tomorrow. Outside that, nothing matters. What I want to see is the deliberate elimination of twenty'—his face quivered and his nostrils opened like mouths—'of twenty women who have been identified as enemies of French Algeria. I believe that if we do this as an act of policy, the Moslems will move down from the casbahs into the cities where we and the Army will be waiting for them——'

'And if they don't?'

'Then,' said Vedoni, 'they'll be labelled as the sons of bitches that they are—cowards too miserable to defend their women. They'll never be able to raise their heads again.'

The officers waited for the General to give his opinion, but he sat with his shoulders crouched.

'It needs great thought,' he said at last. 'I am not disposed to make a snap judgment. The execution of women—that isn't a soldier's job. It's a hangman's.'

'Do you feel the same way about the execution of men, General?' Vedoni asked.

'In this kind of warfare—no,' he answered. 'But women——'

'I'm against it,' de Croissillon said firmly. 'There's no logic in my point of view. But I agree with the General. The execution of a woman can only soil the executioner. Look at Joan of Arc.'

'The English found it useful.'

'Only briefly. No, Vedoni—we have to do enough that's ugly and squalid because that's the kind of struggle they've forced on us. Once we start killing women——'

'But we've started,' said Vedoni. 'The C.-in-C. himself signed the warrant for Elise Friande—the tart who led a platoon into an FLN ambush near the Mosque of Sidi-Abderrhaman.'

'That was selective and exceptional,' said Palice.

'It's no more than I'm recommending,' said Vedoni. 'I am asking you, General, to agree to us hitting the enemy where he's most vulnerable. We've got to show him that he can't shelter behind his women.'

'The FLN have never felt inhibited by chivalry towards European women,' said one of the officers.

'But we're not the FLN,' said de Croissillon. 'Our war's a different one. Otherwise it would have no meaning.'

'Let me put it differently to Colonel de Croissillon,' Vedoni went on relentlessly. 'Say in a fight he used his wife as a shield. Wouldn't he expect her to receive a blow or two?'

'I do my own fighting,' said de Croissillon frigidly. He had always disliked Vedoni, and had once referred to him at a party as an Italian half-breed, ill-bred on both sides, a description which had been reported to Vedoni by a friend.

'That,' said Vedoni, 'isn't the point. All I'm asking is that you should consider whether women who serve as a front deserve immunity.'

'The answer is clearly "no",' the General interposed. 'But this isn't a conference on philosophy. You've made your point, Vedoni. I'll give my attention to it. Let's move on to a few more practical matters. Here we are. Finance—de Croissillon. Tell us what you did in Paris. The banks here have been advancing us a few francs, but we need more.'

He laughed, and the officers joined in. During the day the Bank of Algeria had been held up and nearly half a million New Francs stolen by OAS men.

'I bet,' Palice went on, satisfied with his joke, 'we're better fund-raisers than you are.'

'That may be,' said de Croissillon, smiling. 'But I think you'll find my book-keeping more regular. I have received cheques and guarantees to the value of nearly ten million New Francs.'

'Excellent,' said the General.

'The largest part has come from industry,' de Croissillon continued, 'but I am glad to say that the professions—especially law and medicine—have done splendidly. I registered the Civil Studies Foundation—the object being to create a vehicle for salaries and subsidies and so on—and the Franco-Moslem General Engineering Company for the purpose of dealing in small arms and shipping them . . .'

His detailed statements were followed by similar staff reports from the other officers. By nine o'clock when the conference ended, it was already dark, the air had become chilly, and the officers accepted with a controlled eagerness the whisky offered by de Sigle in the hexagonal ante-room leading to the long saloon where the candles were already blowing in the faint breeze.

*

After dinner the General's party divided into two groups. At one end of the room, he himself talked quietly with his host, de Croissillon and Si Jebaal, an Algiers deputy who had joined ~~them~~ after the conference, while at the other end Vedoni was drinking in a noisy group with the others.

'Vedoni,' said the General, sipping a whisky, 'is the ideal revolutionary. He starts with the great advantage of not being a gentleman.'

During dinner, Palice had drunk heavily but his face, pale and ascetic, showed little sign of it. Behind his gold-rimmed glasses his eyes had a slight glitter as he inspected the lights reflected from the chandeliers in his glass.

'He's got a second advantage,' he went on. 'He's a political philosopher . . . Fluent as they come.'

De Croissillon smiled, and the General said,

'Oh, yes. Of course he is. Most of his contemporaries were—nothing. Nihilists, fake existentialists—nothing. But Vedoni's different. His father worked with Peyrouton. He evacuated him to Spain after 1943. Vedoni grew up as a man of principle. He's a fascist.'

'He's a bore,' said de Croissillon.

'That's his strength,' the General continued. 'I hold the view that the men who get things done are the obsessive ones—or, if you like, the bores.'

'But at what a cost!' de Sigle said, raising his hands. 'What a toll they take of our patience and our health!'

The noise from the other tables had increased, and the General, flicking a glance over them, said,

'Three years ago I commanded an army. Now I command the deserters and the corner boys . . .' He straightened himself, and put down his glass. 'I think you have something to put to me, M. le Député?'

Jebaal simultaneously put his whisky on the table and said, 'Yes, I have.'

He tugged at the lapels of his London-tailored suit, and said,

'I've been sounding opinion, as you know. When I got in two days ago, I made contact with some of the colonels and heads of *Willayas*—all of them old friends of mine or my family.'

'What did they want?'

'Peace—a rest from the killing. I asked them if they'd agree to my proposal—the one I published in *Le Monde*—for a round-table conference between the moderate Moslem elements and the French Government.'

'Irrespective of the FLN?' de Croissillon asked sharply.

'Without the FLN—but with the OAS.'

'What do they say in Paris?' the General asked quietly.

'I've met the Minister twice—'

'What does he say?'

'He said, "Inquire—inspect." It's what I'm now doing.'

The General looked around at the reserved faces of the others, and said,

'It's no good, my dear Jebaal. It's a horse that won't run. We've made it too simple. There are only three runners in this race—FLN, OAS and de Gaulle. And before long, there'll only be two.'

‘And what about the Moslems who trusted France—the mayors, the soldiers, the *harkis*—the local auxiliaries—what about them?’

De Sigle refilled his glass.

‘They must take the consequences as we ourselves will. They must dare to take sides. There’s no insurance in the war we’re fighting. Isn’t that so, de Sigle?’

‘None,’ said de Sigle blandly. ‘You can’t be a sailor and never face a storm. This is just one of the storms. Another drink?’ he asked. De Croissillon put his hand over his glass.

Vedoni strolled over to them, and, uninvited, pulled up a gilt chair.

‘I’ve been thinking,’ he said in his arrogant voice, ‘that de Gaulle in a sense is the Stalin of our revolution.’

‘What sense?’ de Croissillon asked.

‘In Trotsky’s sense,’ said Vedoni. ‘We made a revolution in 1958. De Gaulle betrayed it. The revolution betrayed. The Russians made the mistake of waiting too long with Stalin. They went like sheep . . . Tell me, Jebaal, have you ever slaughtered a sheep?’

The Moslem deputy looked at him cautiously, and said, ‘No—why?’

‘Just apropos of sheep,’ said Vedoni. He was enjoying the uneasiness which he was causing. ‘You look like a man who could kill a sheep and preside over a *diffa*—with grace. I can see you handing out the sheep’s eyes—lovely, succulent sheep’s eyes—’

The General stood, and said,

‘I’m obliged to you for coming, M. le Député. If anything new occurs—’

Jebaal thanked him, and shook hands with de Croissillon and de Sigle. Vedoni had turned his back and was looking out of the windows at the lights along the coastline. Putting an arm round the shoulders of one of his friends, he said,

'I don't trust that little bastard—not one millimetre. You can take it from me—they're all born liars.'

He turned to de Croissillon who had come back to collect his cigarette lighter, and repeated,

'They're all born liars—all of them.'

'I think liars are made, not born,' said de Croissillon, offering Vedoni a cigarette. 'Fear makes liars of most people.'

'They're liars,' said Vedoni sullenly, and de Croissillon saw that he was drunk. 'The only way to deal with them is to kick them hard in the teeth so that they can't talk. You mustn't trust them.'

A grin appeared on his face.

'You'd better tell your father-in-law.'

De Croissillon, who had turned away, faced him again, his mouth set firmly.

'What should I tell my father-in-law?'

Vedoni put his hand on his shoulder, and de Croissillon took half a step back so that Vedoni's hand fell limply to his side. He was silent for a moment. Then he said,

'He's been spending too much time with the wrong people—he's got a lot of FLN at the Mustapha.'

'He's a doctor, not an administrator,' said de Croissillon.

'It's not satisfactory,' said Vedoni. 'Not a bit satisfactory. You must tell him. The doctors who keep alive the *fellouze* who try to kill us—the ones we try to kill in return—no, it's no good.'

He shook his head. De Croissillon had gripped a chair in front of him, and his large knuckles stood out as he held it.

'Listen, Vedoni,' he said in a lowered voice. 'There's nothing wrong with Hassid. He's an old man whose only interest is medicine. I want you to understand one thing—'

'What?' Vedoni asked insolently.

'Nothing is to happen to Hassid—that's an order.' He raised his voice. 'Leave him alone!'

'You are ordering his protection?'

'That's all I have to say.'

'And if there's an accident?'

'I will hold you responsible.'

'You are really enlarging my sphere—of—responsibility—excessively—Colonel.'

Vedoni paused between each word with an exaggerated emphasis. Without answering, de Croissillon looked at his watch and strode over to the General, followed by the glances of the group around Vedoni who had listened impassively to their conversation.

*

From one of the terraces came a whistle. Immediately de Sigle's guests rose and in well-trained platoons fell in behind the General, who was bidding good-bye to his host at the door. They quickly mounted the cars, de Croissillon at the side of Palice. The outriders kicked their engines into throbbing vigour, and within seconds the procession began to move fast down the hill to the coast. They drove with their headlights fully blazing so that the rare vehicles which they passed cowered into the side. At the cross-roads, two of the cars, including the General's, followed the coast towards Algiers while the other went south towards Miliana.

They drove in silence past farms and *douars* till Palice said,

'There's something after all in what Vedoni says. There's a logic in terror that you can't escape. If you will the ends, you must also will the means. You can't enjoy the fruits of terror unless you use the techniques of terror . . . It's very ugly—very. Never mind all that. Tell me, de Croissillon. Are there any good plays in Paris?'

'Nothing very exciting. There's an amusing comedy at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées.'

'What about?'

'Oh—the usual thing. Cuckolding and what not.'

'I suppose that still goes on.'

'All the time, I imagine. It's got nothing to do with politics.'

'How are the politicians?'

'Indifferent—apart from Caniche. All they want is a quiet life.'

They fell into silence again.

Within sight of Algiers the chauffeur turned up a side road towards a farmhouse where a dog had begun to bark. Half a dozen men stood at a gate waiting to receive them, and one of them called out, 'Shoot that damned dog, somebody.'

The General dismounted and they stood to attention.

'Hello, Pisani,' said the General. 'All well?'

'Everything in order, sir,' the farmer replied. De Croissillon caught a glimpse of the weapons in the half-light, and said,

'I'll stay here till 5.30, General, when the curfew's lifted. You'd better get your sleep.'

'No,' said the General. 'Let's have a drink, and then we'll watch the dawn come up together.'

'Are you sure?'

'Yes, I've grown to think of sleep as an indulgence. I remember in the war—when I was with Koenig in the desert—all I could think about was the time when I'd be able to get to sleep . . . We'd fire the last shots at about ten when it got dark . . . Then there'd be a couple of hours seeing to the guns and equipment . . . And at about three or four, it would start getting light again, and we'd start firing again. So there was about two hours' sleep and in the end we'd just pass each other like sleepwalkers.'

'You ought to sleep now.'

'We used our life up at double the speed,' the General went on, ignoring him. 'I'm sixty, you know. I should have retired next year, and gone to sleep in beds, and woken up and gone out shooting with my sons. But one is dead in Indo-China, and the other's in prison in Fresnes . . . So that's that. And here am I moving from one uncomfortable bed to another like a criminal.'

'Or a Casanova,' said de Croissillon.

'But without the fun,' said the General. 'Come on, let's have a drink.'

*

During the night the General, sitting rigidly opposite de Croissillon, as they began to drink a second bottle of cognac, said,

'Tell me, de Croissillon—what have you missed most in your life?'

De Croissillon pondered for a few moments, absorbed by the enormity of a question which he needed all his assembled wits to comprehend, let alone to answer. And Palice, losing interest in the matter, started on a new theme.

'We lost some of our armour . . .' he began, but de Croissillon interrupted, his thoughts now in focus, although his syllables were blurred.

'What I've missed most is leading the kind of family life that I always felt would be my inheritance. There was a pattern of living—the one that my ancestors enjoyed—that I wanted to follow.'

'Why didn't you?'

De Croissillon swallowed the rest of the brandy in his glass, and said,

'It didn't happen like that. I got married. We settled down—but it wasn't the way of life I'd wanted.'

'Why not?' said Palice, observing through the floating detachment which the night's drinking had brought on that de Croissillon, his face flushed and his eyes slightly glazed, was eager to talk about subjects which, sober, he would have punctiliously avoided.

'Why not?' said de Croissillon. 'That's an interesting question . . . why not? Well, there was first of all my marriage. It wasn't the marriage I wanted—it wasn't . . .'

He stopped, and said,

'I shouldn't be talking about that.'

'We're old friends,' said Palice in a voice made hoarse by drink and the night dampness.

'All right,' said de Croissillon, making up his mind. 'I'll tell you. I've always had a strong sense of family—tradition—the way people should live—the responsibility of authority and aristocracy. Does that sound priggish?'

'No,' said Palice.

'That's why I stuck to Pétain—you may disagree.'

'I disagreed—but I could understand.'

'It was my idea of duty. And honour to me meant fulfilling my duty—not just to the Government of the day but to a tradition—to the authority of the past, if you like.'

Palice was silent.

'Once upon a time,' said de Croissillon, 'honour was a simple thing. It was all cut and dried. Chivalry was the code of aristocracy—and beyond that you didn't have to care. If a man insulted you, you challenged him. If he abused you, you fought him.'

'Have another drink,' said Palice, refilling his glass.

'Well, then,' said de Croissillon without answering him, 'in 1944 there came the collapse—and I'm not talking of Giraud or de Gaulle—I'm talking of the crumbling away of all the values that people like myself stood for—tradition, authority, aristocracy—nothing—there was nothing left. The levellers got busy—the little men; the democrats and the politicians took over.'

'But you adjusted yourself,' said Palice.

'Yes,' said de Croissillon slowly. 'Yes, I did.'

'Why?'

'Eliane was a pretty girl—she loved me—I was fond of her—I got married and became a businessman, and I felt I could coexist with the Fourth Republic.'

'You turned out to be a very good businessman.'

'I was adequate,' said de Croissillon, and he suddenly felt truculent. 'But you asked me what I had missed in life.'

'Yes.'

'I missed a marriage in which my wife would have surrounded me with children.'

'Didn't she?'

'I have two children—and that was that—it was all she wanted.'

'What else?'

'The feeling that when I married I'd strengthened a dynasty—enlarged it with equals.'

'What happened?'

'I got a number of relatives called Lévy and Bloch.'

'Is that all?'

'No,' said de Croissillon with a short, harsh laugh. 'Something very strange happened in my marriage—you know, it's really very ungentlemanly of me to talk about my marriage.'

There was a stiff judicial pause as Palice pondered the matter.

'At this hour of the night, it's permissible,' he said. 'What happened?'

De Croissillon brooded again. Then he said,

'I found—after a few months—it was strange—unexpected—I found that I loved my wife deeply. In the middle of all my resentments—against her—and her family—myself as well—I found that I loved her . . . At first, I regretted my marriage with a bitterness, a sort of self-loathing, that I can't begin to describe. And then, I found that I loved her—I loved her with an intense feeling of possession. There was a time early on when I hated even to see a man talk to her.'

'You loved her—that must have made it all worthwhile.'

'No,' said de Croissillon sombrely. 'It existed side by side with the resentment that my life would never be what I wanted it to be.'

'How did she take all this?' said Palice.

'She was confused,' said de Croissillon. 'You see, she was very young when I married her. She couldn't understand how

I felt about things like family honour and the upbringing of the children—or about the poisonous friends she began to surround herself with—the beardies of the Beaux-Arts and *l'Express*.'

His voice had risen angrily.

'How would you have felt—how would you feel,' Palice asked goadingly, 'if your wife went off with one of these characters?'

De Croissillon rose and took his empty bottle of cognac to the wide-open window, and flung it into the darkness where it crashed against the invisible rocks. A startled horse began to neigh, and the dog barked twice, dutifully, before falling asleep again.

'That would be very simple,' said de Croissillon, walking stiffly back to his chair. 'I'd kill them—one by one.'

At five o'clock they looked out of the window at the sullen drift of the morning light. It had rained during the night, and the sea had the grey appearance of an unshaven man.

'I kept you up for this,' said the General disappointedly. They went to the door and stood on the threshold. The rain had washed the air, emphasizing the mingled scents of manure and tamarisk, the eucalyptus from the tree-lined road and the faint orange odour from the hills.

General Palice took a deep breath, and said,

'I was born in Algeria. This is my air.'

As he closed the door on de Croissillon, who had climbed into his car, he added,

'Vedoni is right. When a man's fighting for air, there's nothing he won't do.'

CHAPTER VIII

THE hi-fi bellowed through the cavern. Outside, the bay at La Madrague shimmered in the dazzling sunshine. But within the windowless bar behind the sign that said, 'Twist Club, Permanent Striptease', it was as if it were already night. The young men and women in jeans and shirts who sauntered in from the beach raised their hands and opened their parcels for a rapid examination by the doorkeeper. Then they went down the short flight of stairs into the glow and tumult where the dancers, clinging to each other with the air of people at once absorbed and abstracted, packed the small floor.

Monsieur Miki, the proprietor, guided du Pré to the red plush chairs at a table which had now become his established place.

'Brandy?' du Pré asked.

Miki looked at the crowded room, and said, 'I've got to see to the show . . . All right, just one.'

Du Pré had known him during the war, and on his return to Algiers they had renewed their friendship.

'It's no good,' said Miki—his other name was Sarvac, but no one used it. 'You've only got to look around you to see what's happening. Kids and old men!'

He emptied his glass.

'Even the whores won't come here any more.'

Du Pré, his eyes becoming used to the gloom after the glare outside, scrutinized the tables.

'Still a few left,' he said.

Miki grinned, his face creasing over his collar.

'Those are the Resistance,' he said. 'They've sworn to lie in the last ditch for French Algeria, Algerian Algeria, the army,

the navy or as the case may be. With my girls, the customer has the last word.'

Du Pré smiled back to him, and ordered another two brandies from the waiter.

'It's no good,' said Miki, speaking louder over the sound of the trumpets. 'These are the final convulsions. The city's on the skids. Mark my words—you can smell it. The other day I was driving past El Kettar. There was a funeral procession. They were coming up between the rocks with three coffins. All of a sudden—bang! They dropped the coffins and ran . . . I ask you—is that civilized?'

'Uncivilized,' said du Pré. 'They should have waited for the coffins to be lowered.'

'It's no joke,' said Miki. 'There used to be rules even ~~for~~ bad manners. Now!—' He waved his hand deprecatingly.

The hi-fi had stopped. The dancers, their hands wetly entwined in each other's, were strolling back to their tables, and a pink spotlight had begun to flicker over a chair, draped with a red shawl, which a waiter had put in the centre of the floor.

'What's going on now?' du Pré asked.

'The Permanent Striptease!' said Miki. He rose and leaned across the table to du Pré.

'Tell me, Bob,' he said in a confidential voice, 'how could I get a small bar somewhere near Paris? Nothing very big. Just this size—but without the girls?'

'I'll advertise for you if you like,' said du Pré. 'I'm going home in a month or so. If you're serious—'

'Yes, serious,' said Miki. He walked around the table and sat next to du Pré.

'I tell you, this place is dying. I want to get out on my two legs—I'm sick of it. I'm sending my wife and kids to Marseilles next week.'

'You've got an exit visa?'

'For them—yes.'

'And yourself?'

'Not yet—but I know a fellow——'

'Who?'

Miki looked at du Pré sharply, and said,

'He's pretty big in the OAS—in oil.'

'I hope my own visa will be valid when I have to get back,' said du Pré. 'Let's watch the show.'

'I'm the producer,' said Miki with a wink. 'I've got to be out there. Otherwise, God knows what they'd get up to. Like me to send you Véronique?'

'Yes—send me Véronique,' said du Pré.

As the hi-fi played the opening notes of a slow fox-trot, the dance hostess came and sat next to du Pré.

'Hello,' she said in her flat voice, tugging at the corsage of her strapless beach-dress.

'Hello,' said du Pré.

'Orange champagne,' she said, looking fixedly ahead at the spotlight which now rested on the chair.

'Orange champagne,' du Pré repeated clearly through the silence that had fallen on the audience.

'Sh—sh!' said Véronique, indignant at the disrespect for the performer, who now revealed herself in a fishnet dress through the curtains.

'I'm sorry,' said du Pré.

Véronique had begun to applaud, exciting the rest of the room to do the same.

'That's Consuela,' she said, after making sure that the reception was adequate. 'She's my friend. She's from Bône.'

'I think——' du Pré began.

'Sh—sh,' Véronique repeated, and leant forward with her chin cupped in her hands in order to discourage the interruptions. Her hair fell away from the nape of her head, and du Pré examined briefly the boundary between the black roots and the blonde curls. 'Sh—sh!' she repeated in the direction of a noisy group across the room.

The dancer, a tall heavily built Spaniard with her hair in a

chignon, straddled the chair, its back to the audience, and in time to the music clasped and unclasped her thighs so that the thick muscles tautened and relaxed.

'Isn't she wonderful?' Véronique asked, straining to see her through the bobbing heads in the half-light.

Consuela began to take off the thin layers of her garments, tantalizing the audience with pauses and hesitations. She tugged at her waist, and a skirt dropped to the ground. Then with an indifferent expression she toured the floor in time to the music while the patrons waited for the next phase. Under the rose-coloured spotlight, she spread her shawl on the floor, and writhing in an affected torment which arched her back and presented her lumbar region to the admiration of her whistling audience, discarded a number of garments held together with press-studs. She lay still and looked around. 'Right off!' a soldier called out, and as if revived she again paraded along the tables in a clumsy *pas seul*, frozenly, ignoring the pasturing eyes, the shouts and the gestures. Lacking invention, she returned and straddled the chair.

'Take it off!' the soldier shouted, and she rose and pulled the chair away. When she unhooked the last skirt, she stood in the centre of the room, her legs apart, her breasts arrogantly exposed, her long dark hair hanging down, and her mouth unsmiling while she waved a nylon stocking contemptuously in the face of an elderly man who approached to applaud her. Du Pré joined in the ovation with a few perfunctory handclaps.

'More! More!' said Véronique, revived by the champagne. She took his hands in hers and beat them vigorously together. 'Come on,' she said. 'Consuela's my friend.'

Du Pré ordered her another orange champagne, and when the spotlight was switched off and the dancing started again, asked if she would dance with him.

'No,' said Véronique, pouting in the way she had learned from the cinema. 'You never talk to me—never take me anywhere. You've been here four times—'

'Five,' said du Pré.

'You never tell me anything. All you do is sit there. Why don't you tell me about Paris? I don't even know your job.'

'I told you—I'm interested in pictures.'

'Pictures!' Véronique repeated musingly. 'I knew a producer once—they did a film about the war at Charchell. It was all about a submarine and an American general. He said he might get me a part. Do you know any producers?'

'No.'

'Oh.'

'Anyhow, I deal in a different sort of pictures.'

She began to giggle.

'Why are you laughing?'

She continued to laugh. 'Nothing—there was a chap once—oh, nothing. Come on, let's dance.'

On the floor, the animated conversation became submerged by the tango rhythm. The dancers moved like a single beast with multiple legs, crawling crablike in an anti-clockwise motion, and exuding a stench of sweat and civet.

'It's lovely,' said Véronique, pressing her breasts into du Pré's chest.

'Yes, lovely,' said du Pré, catching sight of a rime of dandruff on her fair hair, and averting his face.

'I like the tango best,' she said.

'Better than the twist?'

'Oh, yes—I've been twisting all my life—ever since I was fourteen. My uncle taught me.'

She laughed again, and said, 'It's lovely.'

'Do you know many people here?' du Pré asked.

'Why do you want to know?' she replied, drawing away and examining his expression. He decided that she was about thirty-three.

'Well, if you want to know,' he began, his fingers pressing into the back of her moist blouse. Then he stopped, and she said,

'Go on.'

'Well, I don't know,' du Pré continued slowly.

She again drew away, and studied him cautiously.

'How do you mean?' she asked. 'Go on—you'd better tell me now.'

The music ended, and they stood with the others in the din of conversation waiting for the next record. When it began, Véronique came quickly into his arms, and said,

'I'm not going to let you off. Come on—tell me.'

'Well,' said du Pré, hesitantly, 'if you like someone you want to know about their friends.'

'I really think you're jealous,' she said with a pleased look. 'Jealous! That's rather sweet.'

'No, it isn't,' said du Pré. 'Jealousy is a painful, ugly feeling.'

The thought of his wife in Paris entered his mind, but Véronique's metallic voice quickly banished it.

'You haven't answered me,' he said. The music was urging them forward with pauses, thrusts, retreats, advances, pauses, relaxations and thrusts.

'It's lovely,' she said, her face against his cheek.

'Well, tell me,' du Pré lowered his voice into her ear.

'There's nobody, you stupid,' she answered. 'I know everyone who comes here. But no one gets near me.'

'But——'

'Yes—that's not important. You can do that and still belong all to yourself, I know. It's the same with Consuela. There's no one gets near me. Let's have another drink.'

They jostled their way through the crowd to the table, and as Véronique drank her third orange champagne, du Pré asked,

'What about all these young men?'

She waved her glass and said,

'I don't like young men.'

'What do you like?'

The mascara had run from one of her eyes as they became liquid with emotion.

'I like you.'

She leaned forward and kissed his ear.

'Why don't you like young men?' du Pré insisted. She put her face on his shoulder, and was thoughtful for a moment. Then she said,

'They boast.'

'What's wrong with that?'

'They boast,' she repeated dreamily. 'They come here and they boast.'

'About girls? That's quite normal.'

'No—not about girls. They boast about killing—about how many they've killed. They're kids, and they boast. It gives me bad dreams . . . Sometimes—afterwards—they've turned to me and boasted.'

'I don't believe it,' said du Pré.

'Yes—it's true,' she said. 'That one over there.'

She raised her hand to point at a young man with an open-necked shirt who was dancing with a thin, dark-eyed girl who looked like a student, but du Pré put his hand on her wrist quickly, and said,

'Don't point, sweetie. He mightn't like it.'

'That's Armidal.'

She said his name with a mixture of familiarity and awe as she might have claimed acquaintance with a pop-singer.

'Yes—Armidal. He's the one who killed the social workers at El Biar.'

'How do you know?'

'He told me . . . It was funny. He didn't say anything. They all came back here afterwards for a drink, and then he went and lay down in the back. I went and looked after him, and he was crying. But he fell fast asleep, and afterwards he was all excited and bragging like a man who's been with a woman.'

'Wasn't he one of Vedoni's lot?'

Her expression became cunning, and she raised her glass to her face and eyed him through it.

'You want to know too much,' she said.

'Oh, no,' he answered casually. 'Everyone knows about Vedoni and the Social Centre.'

'I know Vedoni,' she said, putting her glass down.

'What do you think of him?'

'Oh, he's all right.'

'Like another drink?'

'No'—she giggled—'I'll have Miki after me. The rule here is that the customers drink and we just sip.'

'Don't bother about him,' said du Pré. 'Miki's an old pal of mine. He used to be my sergeant.'

'He's done all right,' said Véronique with a sullen glance towards the door. 'He's scared stiff, though.'

'Why?'

'Oh, God knows—he's sure the OAS or the FLN are going to do him one day.'

'But isn't he pretty thick with Vedoni?'

'Why don't you ask him?'

'He told me.'

'Well, why ask me?'

'Because I think you and Vedoni—'

'Me?'

She laughed aloud so that the three men sitting alone at the next table turned their heads.

'I wouldn't touch that bastard with a boat-hook.'

'Why not?'

She shrugged her shoulders.

'He's complicated. He used to come here but some of the girls got frightened . . .'

'Let's dance,' du Pré said.

'No,' said Véronique. 'I don't want to dance.'

She put her hand on his knee and said,

'You're a good-looking boy. Why don't you ever come inside with me? Aren't I attractive? Feel—it's all me.'

She pressed her breast against his elbow.

'You're very attractive,' said du Pré, taking her hand and putting it gently down on her own knee. 'But that's the way we live in Algiers . . . Night club three to five—work five to eight-thirty.'

'But if you wanted to——'

Du Pré had taken out his wallet, and was holding it below the level of the table.

'I don't want your money,' Véronique said resentfully, finishing the rest of her champagne. Du Pré pressed a five-thousand Old Franc note into her hand, and said,

'Well, save it for me.'

She smiled at him, and kissed him on the cheek.

'All right,' she said. 'One day you can have it for nothing. When are you coming again?'

'Tomorrow—no, the day after.'

'Try and come tomorrow.'

'I will . . . Do these chaps come here every day?' He jerked his head in the direction of Armidal and his friends.

'Yes . . . They come to see *their* girls every day.'

'After work?'

'Yes—after work,' she said glumly. 'I'll tell you something. It excites the girls . . . They get a kick out of it.'

'And you?'

'No.' She gave a shudder. 'It makes me sick.'

'I'd have thought they'd retire after they'd scored ten or so.'

'It isn't like that—they get to like killing. They want more and more of it. You know what it's like. They get so that they want variety. They want it different. A change—sort of. You're a man—or are you?'

'I am,' said du Pré calmly.

'Well, you should know what it's like. What's wrong with me?'

'Nothing.'

'Well, why don't you do something about it?'

She was becoming truculent again.

He kissed her on both cheeks. 'Because I've got work to do. Good-bye, Véronique.'

She rose with him, and when he had gone she sauntered thoughtfully past the tables to where Armidal was sitting with two girls and three other men.

Dr. Hassid rose painfully from his chair to greet du Pré.

'This,' he said, 'is Maître Varin, the distinguished lawyer—M. Boutard, former mayor, Mlle Dulac, who teaches English, and M. Gibello, secretary of one of our trade unions.'

Du Pré shook hands with the doctor's visitors, as they rose in a semi-circle to welcome him. They watched him with a constraint which had nothing in common with Hassid's relaxed bonhomie.

'I hope I'm not butting in,' said du Pré.

'No,' Hassid answered, 'I wanted you to join us because I think you can help.'

The old man chuckled to himself and said,

'You ought to know, Robert, that this meeting in my study may be historic.'

He waited for a comment from one of the others, but they sat unsmiling. Mlle Dulac, a sallow-faced woman of about forty, turned the papers in her thin fingers and looked away. Varin passed his hand reflectively over his closely shaven face and Boutard and Gibello, each with a long experience of passive attendance on speeches, stared straight ahead.

'Why "historic" you may ask,' said Hassid, disappointed that the question hadn't been put to him. 'I will tell you. Some of us here have come to the conclusion that if only someone—a group of people—would take the initiative, the great mass of inert opinion in Algiers would begin to stir.'

'What do you think the "great mass of opinion" wants?' asked du Pré.

'It wants peace,' Mlle Dulac interposed quickly, but Hassid said,

'It's more exact than that. It wants a lead. Who was it who said that democracy is a flock without a shepherd? I don't agree with such a facile definition. I think the shepherd is an integral part of the analogy. It isn't democracy but anarchy that's the flock without the shepherd. Isn't that right, M. Gibello?'

'Yes,' said Gibello.

'And so,' Hassid went on comfortably, 'we've decided that we should do something to end what is, after all, the complicity of the population in—in what's been going on.'

There was a silence in which the small Breguet clock on Hassid's table suddenly struck six. It struck hurriedly as if impatient of the passage of time, and they all turned to look at the curlicued hands, inspecting their familiar aspect as if in relief that by contrast with their own uncertainties these, at least, were predictable.

'We have decided,' said Hassid, 'that the best way to rally what I would call centre opinion is to form an association.'

'Another association?' asked du Pré.

'Yes, another association, but this one will be called PPPP—Partisans of the Programme for the Policies of the President. It will include some of the Resistance associations, the SFIO, teachers, any trade unionists we can get. The PPPP!'

Varin smiled.

'It's long,' he said, 'but it's also short.'

'It states the whole programme,' said Boutard, 'without any equivocation.'

'It will have a wide appeal,' said Mlle Dulac, 'to everyone who supported de Gaulle in May '58, and before that too. It will create a new link of sympathy with Metropolitan France. It will be the focus where everything and everybody that isn't OAS can rally.'

'You see, Robert,' said Hassid, his eyes brightening behind his glasses, 'there's never been anywhere for a person to make a stand. Here we are—a few people—not unrepresentative,

who are saying to the Algerians, Europeans as well as Moslems, "This is the point where we stand." You're a civil servant—you're in the administration. What's your feeling?"

'Have you spoken to the Delegate General?' du Pré asked. Hassid brushed aside his question.

'I tried. There was no one there to give a firm answer. This isn't a matter for authority.'

Du Pré looked down at the Moroccan carpet, his eye following the pattern to where the alizarin dye faded at Hassid's feet, while the others waited for his comments.

'I think,' said du Pré, 'I'd rather hear what the rest have to say.'

'What I have to say,' said Gibello, pressing his splayed fingers on his knees, 'is simple. I'm a docker. That's my trade. We've worked for years with the Arabs in the port. If the OAS would leave us alone, we'd manage to live in Algeria—whatever happens. But they don't. The OAS—what are they? They've got money. They sit in Paris. They hire killers—deserters. They stir up mud in Bab-el-Oued, like a dredger down by the moles. Eighty per cent of my people follow the OAS. Why? Because no one offers anything different.'

He twitched the corner of his mouth, and the gesture seemed incongruous with the heavy monolithic face.

'I'll tell you——' He wagged a heavy finger at du Pré. 'There you are—a civil servant. You're here just for the time being. But we live here. This is the only life we have—the only one we know. Some of us can be refugees. Some can't even be that. Some can run. And some are too proud to run.'

'Socrates, you will remember,' said Maître Varin, 'was one of them.'

'There's a time,' said Gibello, 'when the victim spits in the executioner's face. And then, there's a miracle. It's the executioner who runs.'

'We need a framework,' said Hassid. 'I'm convinced that once we have a framework, groups of PPPP will spring up all

over Algeria. There must be decent people everywhere who are just waiting to be given a lead.'

'Do you think the Moslems will take it?' du Pré asked.

'Of course,' said Hassid. 'For the moment they're frightened. They think it might be a trap. They're afraid of the FLN, the OAS, the MNA—they're afraid of everything. What we have to do is become an Algerian movement. With the backing of Paris, perhaps Rocher Noir, perhaps even Tunis, I'm hoping we'll be able to rally moderate opinion everywhere in Algeria.'

'And then?'

'Then,' said Gibello, 'there'll be a real mass movement of the centre that the OAS won't be able to blunt. Our main job is to restore confidence. It means we've got to make people start thinking again in terms of law and order. We've got to make it safe for a man to telephone the police station to ask for protection. We can only do that under the umbrella of the cease-fire—if it ever happens.'

'We've got to make a new start,' said Mlle Dulac, 'and make a new Algeria.'

'Well,' said Hassid in a business-like voice, 'we'd better begin by appointing an interim secretary. I propose Mlle Dulac . . . All in favour? . . .' They nodded their heads. 'Carried!' said Hassid.

'And I,' said Maître Varin, 'would like to propose Professor Hassid to be our acting chairman.'

Hassid, flattered by the nomination, was about to speak when du Pré broke in.

'I'm not sure that that's a good idea.'

He crossed his legs and put his arm over the back of his chair.

'It seems to me,' he said, 'that for a job of this kind you need a man with some political experience. With great respect to my friend, Dr. Hassid, he has really no knowledge of practical politics at all. I don't think a distinguished figurehead is enough.'

'Oh, come,' said Hassid, 'this committee will make up its own mind, but to say I'm without knowledge of politics——'

'Practical politics,' said du Pré.

'Yes, practical politics,' Hassid went on with a trace of irritation. 'Why, I stood as a municipal councillor almost before you were born. Really!'

'That's just the point,' said du Pré, lighting a cigarette. 'Your politics, Dr. Hassid, belong to an Algeria that isn't here any more. It's no good talking here in liberal terms. These people—all of them—are hard bargainers. You need a lawyer—you, Maître—or a trade unionist—you, M. Gibello—to lead a committee of this kind. Someone who's used to talking tough—and talking tough in realistic terms.'

Hassid took off his glasses to polish them as du Pré developed his argument. He spoke aggressively, emphasizing each argument with a thrust of his cigarette. When he finished, Maître Varin said quietly,

'I move that Dr. Hassid serve as acting chairman.'

'I second it,' said Mlle Dulac.

Du Pré said, 'I haven't any standing in this committee. As a civil servant I'm supposed to be without politics. But as Dr. Hassid has invited me here to take part in the proceedings, I hope he won't mind if I vote against him—unless he withdraws.' He turned to the doctor. 'There are half a dozen reasons why you're unsuitable.'

'I can think of a dozen,' said Hassid. 'On the other hand, there may be one or two why I may be able to be of service. What's the chief reason why you think I'm unfitted for this job?'

Du Pré hesitated. Then he said,

'I'll tell you frankly. You represent no one.'

'No one?' said Hassid. 'But surely—surely I represent tens of thousands—thousands of modest people who only want to live and work in peace?'

'You've nothing to offer—you can't bring to the table the

organized support of anyone—not even your professional association. You know very well that every organized group in Algiers is pro-OAS.’

‘But that’s just the point,’ Hassid protested mildly. ‘We want to try and organize support for General de Gaulle. After all, I’m not unknown in Algiers. I’ve lived here all my life; my father, my grandfather—all of us were born here.’ He fingered the rosette on a yellow background in his buttonhole and said, ‘I’m a Commander of the Legion of Honour. I speak Arabic as well as Ben Khedda—better than Bourguiba. If anyone can say he’s a French Algerian, I think I can say so. If you tell me I’m incompetent as a politician, I must agree that time may prove you right. For the moment’—his voice became firm—‘I’m as valid a candidate as anyone . . . I’m going to put the resolution to the meeting. All those in favour that I should serve as acting chairman?’

With the exception of du Pré, his visitors raised their hands.

‘Carried!’ said Hassid. He smiled happily and unresentfully to du Pré and said,

‘What is the next step?’

‘Our next step,’ said Mlle Dulac, ‘must be to issue a manifesto and give it to the Press.’

‘That’s excellent,’ said Hassid. ‘Excellent. What shall we call it?’

‘We want a title that’s short and accessible to everyone,’ said Maître Varin in his mellow voice. ‘What about “An Appeal to Reason”?’

‘That’s very good,’ said Hassid. ‘“An Appeal to Reason.”’

‘I think “To Men of Reason” is better,’ said Mlle Dulac.

There was silence till Gibello said, ‘I don’t like it. It smells like one of those manifestoes by the intellectuals—something cooked up by *L’Express*.’

‘*L’Express*,’ said Mlle Dulac, ‘is a paper of outstanding courage. If more people read it—’

‘They don’t,’ said Gibello impatiently. ‘It’s no good appeal-

ing to men of reason. I'd say at a guess that only a third of the population think of themselves as "men of reason". Anyhow, what about the women? It won't do.'

'Well, what do you suggest?' Maître Varin asked.

'I suggest "To Algerians of Goodwill". That's got the lot. Algerians means Moslems and Europeans. Goodwill—we all think we've got it.'

'The OAS? The FLN?' said the lawyer. He didn't look at Gibello as he spoke. His legal practice had been chiefly concerned with company law, and he had never previously had contact with a trade-union leader except in the courts.

'No,' said Gibello bluntly. He disliked lawyers in general, and expressed his feelings in flat contradictions. 'I'm talking of men and women who are supposed to hold democratic views—and I'm thinking first of all of the organized workers.'

'But you know—down in the port—you said yourself—they're ninety per cent OAS.'

'All my dockers want is the chance to live,' said Gibello. 'They want their daily bread and a drink at the end of the day. They're good lads.'

'I doubt if they matter so much at the moment. What we want to get at,' said the lawyer, 'are the articulate middle classes—the shopkeepers, officials, postmen, teachers—people of that kind. You want the people who can read——'

'Are you saying the dockers at Al Djefra are illiterate? Do you realize that those dockers are politically among the most mature——'

Gibello's face had become flushed, and Hassid hastily interposed and said,

'The best way is to synthesize the two titles. How about—let me see—"An Appeal to Men of Goodwill and Reason"?''

There was a silence till Maître Varin and Gibello said, almost simultaneously,

'It's very good.'

'We must see if the archbishop will sign it,' said the lawyer.

'Perhaps we can get the clergy and the mayor,' said Mlle Dulac.

'Let's get it drafted first,' said Gibello curtly.

'I did a very provisional draft,' said Mlle Dulac. 'Perhaps I can read it to you.'

Du Pré rose, and said to Hassid,

'I hope you'll excuse me. I have to get back.'

With his arm round du Pré's shoulders, Hassid rose and walked to the door.

'Our sages say, "Better a friend's bite than an enemy's kiss."'

Du Pré didn't answer. Feeling the old man's dry warm hand on his own when he said good-bye, he wanted to return his benevolent smile. But the smile faded as he looked, and the two men confronted each other solemnly.

'The fratricidal struggle in Algeria——' they heard Mlle Dulac begin.

Du Pré opened the door and left.

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As he stepped into the Rue Michelet, he met Eliane who was getting out of her car.

'It's deliberate,' she said. 'You always leave when I arrive.'

'I love your dress,' said du Pré, contemplating her.

'You're changing the subject,' said Eliane. 'Do you really?'

'Yes,' said du Pré. 'White silk and brown arms are my favourite combination.'

She smiled into his face.

'You never told me that in the war.'

'No, I didn't. It's taken me all this time to pluck up my courage.'

Her eyes became serious, and she said,

'How is Papa?'

'He's very well and cheerful. He's got some friends with him.'

Eliane took his arm, and drew him to the heavy door where she pressed the concierge's bell.

'We shouldn't stand talking in the street. Why don't you stay a while?'

Du Pré looked at his wrist-watch, and said, 'I've got to meet an English journalist in the Aletti.'

His gaze rested on the thin gold chain with a heart-shaped pendant on her wrist, and she said,

'What are you thinking about?'

'I was wondering,' du Pré answered, 'who gave you that.'

In the month that followed her return to France from their honeymoon, de Croissillon had accompanied her on a circuit of houses belonging to his friends and distant relations. Surrounding and appraising her with their cold faces, they nevertheless excluded her from their intimacy, their private allusions and their history. In a trap of boredom which made her feel that her nerves were screaming to her private ear, she sat through dinner parties and bridge parties and evening parties, listening to gossip about unfamiliar names, sporting events and family intrigues as remote and strange as the deep-green landscape and the Gothic architecture. When she tried to initiate conversation about music or some play she had seen or read about, they turned to her with a concentrated politeness, acknowledging her presence with an 'Oh, yes' before returning to their inbred themes. If they spoke of politics, it was to state their hatred of democratic politicians. They never discussed policies; their observations were limited to dogma.

On one occasion at the de Veillerats, they had been lacera-ting the Provisional Government with small talk, when Eliane interposed that she and her father had known most of its members very well. She thought very highly of Mendès-France; indeed, the franc might have been in a happier condition if de Gaulle had followed his recommendations for recalling the old franc and making a new issue instead of accepting Pleven's more conservative recommendations. They

had listened to her in a total silence as if she were committing an indelicacy. Her voice faltered when she came to the name 'Pleven', but her self-respect required her to persevere to the end of her sentence. Her husband wasn't looking at her; they had been preparing to go for a walk, and he was playing with the head of his walking-stick. When she finished, there was a pause before M. de Veillerat said in his old, thin voice, 'Most interesting! You're lucky, de Croissillon, to have a wife who can settle our complicated affairs so easily . . . What do you think of Black Pegasus for the Cannes Handicap?'

Afterwards in their bedroom, she took part for the first time in an episode which was to become systematized in their life together. During the rest of the day de Croissillon had barely spoken to her. As she was undressing, she said,

'Walter, darling, did I say anything wrong?'

'No—nothing,' he answered, not looking at her.

'But I must have,' she said. 'Otherwise why aren't you talking to me?'

He was silent.

'But you must tell me,' she insisted, approaching him. 'How can I put things right if you don't tell me?'

He turned his back on her and busied himself with his dressing-case, and she sat helplessly on the bed.

Suddenly he faced her, his face bitter with rage, the words pouring out in a savage froth that distorted his mouth and made it ugly.

'Why the hell do you try to be so clever? Why the devil do you always work so hard to draw attention to yourself wherever we go?'

'But, Walter——' she began in astonishment.

'Don't "Walter" me,' he spat out. 'I'm sick of you trying to show off with your damned intellectual pretensions . . . It's all right for the Mellah . . .' He stopped in his anger to study the effect of his malice. Then he went on, 'It doesn't do with us here.'

She rose and went over to him, and said,
'Perhaps tomorrow you'll be . . .'

'Tomorrow,' he said, 'I'm going to Geneva.' As if starting on a new sap to undermine her, he said,

'And what about Fauvet?'

'Fauvet? Who is he?'

'Fauvet—you damned, little liar—the one you were sneaking about with in the corner—laughing, giggling—with your de-meaning, insulting behaviour.'

'Walter,' she said, looking at his twisted face in amazement, 'you must be mad. I didn't even know his name—I hardly spoke two words to him.'

He took her wrist, and said,

'You're lying . . .'

She tried to snatch it away, but he gripped it tightly, crunching the flesh and bones till she burst into tears of pain and humiliation. Then he bent over her, and kissed her mouth and shoulders and seized her hair while she said,

'Oh, Walter, you said such ghastly things . . . when I love you so much.'

And they clung to each other till they were destroyed, and later, wakeful, she watched his contented sleep, thinking that she had added to her knowledge of him.

And so it had been throughout their married life with his sudden, irrational rages—the furies of guilt—followed by a climacteric reconciliation, and appeasement and a forgetting. Once, he had threatened to throw her and himself from a fifth-floor window, and once to strangle the children with a telephone cord. After the convulsion, the exhaustion.

And after such an occasion a long time ago when he had restored to her mind the concept of a courteous and fulfilling husband, she had accepted the gold chain and pendant from him, resolving always to wear it.

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'It was a long time ago,' said Eliane, with a negligent glance at the pendant. Her expression became formal, and she said, 'How is your catalogue getting on?'

'Slowly.'

'Are you working hard?'

'Not very.'

He was looking at her directly, and she averted her eyes.

'There is something, Eliane, I wanted to tell you.'

'What is it?'

'It's about your father.'

She turned her head sharply towards him, and said,

'Is anything wrong?'

'No—not yet. But I'm concerned about him'—he looked upwards in the direction of the Hassid flat. 'He's just accepted the chairmanship of a new Gaullist association . . . That's why they're having the meeting.'

'Is that wrong?' Eliane asked stiffly.

Du Pré approached her more closely so that his words would be inaudible to the concierge who had begun to scrub the stairs.

'It isn't wrong,' said du Pré. 'It's unwise.'

Eliane opened her white leather handbag and closed it again.

'I know,' she said in a subdued voice. 'I know. I only wish I could persuade him to come back with us to France. I've felt like that ever since the Gala.'

'He won't go. He's dug his heels in.'

She shook her head, and said,

'Thank you, Robert, for telling me. I'm very grateful. I—'

Du Pré took her hands in his and said,

'There is something you can do, Eliane. Try and persuade him to give up the chairmanship. Tell him he's too old—no, that won't do—it's made him look years younger—tell him you need more of his time—something of that kind. I think he'll listen to you.'

'I will . . . I certainly will,' said Eliane. 'But there's a prob-

lem—my husband wants us to move from Daddy's place. He wants to take a villa outside Algiers—somewhere on the coast.'

'I see,' said du Pré.

'What is there to see?' said Eliane, pressing the button of the lift.

'I think,' said du Pré, pulling back the iron grille when the lift arrived, 'that your father will be safer if your husband stays here.'

'Will you explain that to me?'

'I will—but not now.'

'When?'

'Tomorrow.'

'Are you serious?'

'Yes.'

He let the lift door slide back, and they stood together like accomplices.

'Meet me tomorrow at three,' said du Pré, 'in the Jardin d'Essai.'

'Where?' said Eliane.

'By the lake—near the giant araucaria.'

'How can I tell what the what's it is?'

They both laughed.

'It's that big monkey-puzzle tree near the Palais des Beaux-Arts. You took me there once during the war. You've forgotten.'

'No,' said Eliane, 'I hadn't forgotten. It's just that when I thought of it, I always called it the Tree.'

She waved to him, and he turned away as the lift ascended.

'What are you grinning about?' said Fowler. They were standing at the Cintra Bar of the Hôtel Aletti, drinking dry Martinis and watching the entrance as journalists and officers came in to join them.

'I'm grinning, Tom,' said du Pré, 'because I'm happy.'

'What's there to be happy about in Algiers?'

'Only private things.'

'And what are they? There's nothing private in Algiers. You can't even go to bed without someone barging in and waking you up. Last night the OAS were looking for Guérin. Three of them shoved their way into my room, went through my papers.' He shrugged his shoulders. 'It's a way of living. I don't like it.'

He raised his glass, and bent his head forward to sip it.

'I've been here six months. It's too long. Did you go to Mass today?'

'Yes.'

'They got Colonel Fouquet this evening.'

Du Pré's fingers closed around the stem of his glass.

'They killed him as he was leaving the Cathedral after Mass. Three of them—three OAS—the usual trick. They put out a broadcast at seven. They've sworn to wipe out every *barbouze*.'

His flabby face was impassive as he ordered more drinks.

'He was a hell of a good chap,' said Schiller, an American agency correspondent. 'He was one of their best men against the FLN. Commander of the Legion of Honour—decorated in the field. Then they put him up against the OAS.'

'It's a confusing life,' said Fowler. 'Very confusing. Patriot today, traitor tomorrow, martyr the day after. Your only hope is to be a neutral—a journalist or a civil servant. You know, Bob, I never thought you'd end up as a civil servant when I knew you in the war.'

'Neither did I,' said du Pré.

'I never made forecasts in the war,' said Schiller. 'The basic assumption was that everyone would end up a stiff. All the rest was chance.'

'What are the chances in Algiers?' said Fowler. 'They're killing twenty Moslems a day. That's a conservative figure. The FLN are kidnapping about six a day. They send them

back in sacks . . . On top of that, there's a good chance of being knocked down by a taxi.'

'You wait till after the cease-fire,' said Schiller, swallowing the remains of his whisky. 'You wait till the Moslems come down from the casbahs. You wait till they set about the OAS.'

'And each other,' said Fowler.

*

In his room at the Hôtel de l'Angleterre, du Pré tore up the letter he had begun to write to his wife. He had already sent off his reports, and now, wearing only a shirt and trousers, he lay with his arms behind his head, thinking of the day's events. The music of the Twist Club jangled with the voices of Hassid and Gibello and Véronique. He heard the din of the Aletti bar in his ears like the oceanic roar within a sea-shell. And the silence of the city after the curfew was itself a sound composed of clocks ticking, the groaning of the bed, a far-off grinding of gears, the unease of a lull in battle. He thought of Fouquet dead on the steps of the Cathedral of Notre Dame d'Afrique—Fouquet who disliked wearing civilian clothes surrounded in his ignoble sprawl by the surprised worshippers who had so lately joined him in his prayers, Fouquet who only three days earlier had spoken of his forthcoming leave and the house he had taken for his wife and three children at Cavalière. Du Pré heaved his body from the bed, and tried the lock of his door, and was angry with himself. The lock was flimsy, and only gave him a token safety.

He undressed, switched off the light, and shut his eyes. A red image lingered on his retina behind the lids.

'Eliane!' he said, 'Eliane!' And with the name in his mind like a talisman, he fell asleep.

CHAPTER IX

DR. HASSID rang the bell in his study, and after a few moments, Francesca appeared, wiping her hands on her apron. She had been interrupted in her cooking, and her brown face was darkened by a flush. Hassid looked up from the typed foolscap paper in front of him, and said,

‘Ah yes, Francesca! What are we eating tonight?’

‘I told you,’ she answered. ‘Veal.’

‘Yes,’ Hassid said reflectively, taking off his glasses. ‘Veal—that’s very good.’

Francesca waited briefly to see if he had any further orders. But as she turned to go, Hassid said,

‘I want to consult you, Francesca.’

‘Me?’

‘Yes, you. I want your opinion—how can I put it?—as an ordinary woman.’

‘What about?’

‘About a pamphlet some of us are putting out. Take a seat, Francesca.’

Surprised at the invitation, she examined her employer doubtfully, and said,

‘I don’t understand politics.’

‘No, of course not,’ said Hassid. ‘Who does?’ He picked up an ophthalmoscope that lay on the table, switched on its light, switched it off, and put it back. ‘This isn’t politics, this is just ordinary common sense. Sit down, Francesca.’

‘One minute,’ said the old woman, still with her reserved air. ‘I’ll have to turn the stove down.’

She went quickly to the kitchen, combed her hair, and when she returned to Hassid’s study, she had already removed her

apron. The doctor waved her to the worn armchair which patients used on the occasions when he saw them at home, and said,

'I want to read this to you, Francesca, and if there's anything you like or don't like, you'll tell me. Is that agreed?'

'Yes, sir,' said Francesca.

She put the tips of her fingers together, and nodded. Without the insignia of domesticity, she felt more relaxed, and could call Hassid 'sir'—a term which her anarchist father had always denied to himself and his family—without feeling that she had forfeited her egalitarian principles. For thirty years she and her employer had enjoyed a guerrilla. During this period, Hassid had sacked her four times, but she had reinstated herself by a well-founded reliance on his inertia and incapacity to sustain anger for longer than five minutes. A stranger might have thought that they bore each other a lifelong grudge for the accident which had linked them as employer and servant. In fact, when Francesca brought Hassid his morning coffee, each had the same secret thought: that the existence of the other made life pleasant and comfortable.

'Ready?' said Hassid, putting his glasses on again.

'Yes,' said Francesca, her head shaking a little as she leaned forward to hear what the doctor had to say.

'The title we decided on in the end,' said Hassid, 'is "An Appeal to Algerians of Goodwill and Reason." Do you like it?'

'Yes. It's quite good. It isn't fair for some to do the fighting and others not to do anything,' said Francesca, pouring out her opinions and grievances in a rapid voice. 'Take Madame Labrousse. She's got a son of twenty-four—she says he had rheumatic fever—but I can tell you, Doctor, when he comes home at four in the morning with his women——'

'That's not the point,' said Hassid, interrupting.

'Well, it is the point . . . Goodwill!' she exclaimed, addressing the air. 'Goodwill! What's goodwill when my nephews were out in the *bled* for three years . . .'

'I think you'd better listen till I ask for your comments,' Hassid said.

Francesca leaned back in her chair still following her own train of thought as Hassid started to read.

'“The fratricidal struggle in Algeria has entered a new phase since the discussions on peace in Evian. The crimes of the FLN have been succeeded and continued by the crimes of the OAS.”'

Hassid lowered his glasses and said, looking over them, as in a parenthesis,

'I think it important in a case like this to produce as balanced a case as one can.'

'That's right,' said Francesca. Then as an afterthought, she spat and added, 'FLN bastards!'

Hassid raised his hand and read on.

'“Each day brings new evidence that this antiphon of violence can only swell the satanic anthem of hate.”' He gave her a quick glance to see if she understood the sentence.

'“The plastic bombs have littered the streets with broken glass and charred woodwork. Our children no longer go to school. The shopkeeper greets his customers with fear. The bank clerk trembles in front of his clients. The civil servant is intimidated, the policeman turns his back. The blood-stained pavement is a familiar aspect of our city. Killers—hirelings, deserters and adolescents who do not understand the cause in which their hands are stained—terrorize the streets. Once upon a time they could claim they fought an alien enemy. Today, their enemy is their own kith and kin. Determined to destroy Algeria in their own self-destruction, they kill and burn blindly and indiscriminately. Algerians! Ask yourselves this question. Shall Algeria live or die? Do you want an Algeria living its civilization independently and in harmony with France? Or do you want the Algeria of the OAS—an Algeria ravaged, blasted, dying in a slow haemorrhage of murder, robbery and lawlessness?”'

Hassid dropped his voice, which had climbed with the rhetorical questions, and said,

'The phrase about the "haemorrhage of murder, robbery and lawlessness" is mine.'

'It's right,' said Francesca, speaking rapidly. 'I had a cousin—Theresa—she had a haemorrhage—after her second baby. She was a pretty girl—very pretty. They tried to give her blood, but it was no good. She kept right on bleeding till she died. You'd never think people had so much blood in them . . . Last week, they were washing away the pavement where the postman was killed. With hoses! The gutters were running with blood, I can tell you! It looked as if the whole city was bleeding to death.'

'Yes,' said Hassid, leaning forward with interest. 'You've put it exactly, Francesca.' He pencilled a note in the margin. 'We must add it.' He spoke the sentence slowly. 'The city of Algiers is bleeding to death.'

Emboldened by her success, Francesca said,

'It's the FLN—the swine!'

Hassid silenced her impatiently, and probed with his finger for the place he had lost when she interrupted.

'"Courage,"' he read on, ' "has been perverted and prostituted to base uses, while cowardice has taken on the mask of heroism." Do you understand what that means?'

'Yes, I know what it means,' said Francesca. 'It means——' She stopped and fumbled for the answer like a schoolgirl, caught in a daydream, who is asked by her teacher to name the capital of Peru.

'It means,' Hassid said, 'that even among the killers of the FLN and the OAS there are brave men. But their bravery has been used for wicked purposes . . . And then there are the cowards—the ones who shoot a Frenchwoman alone in a motor-car or an Arab flower-seller from behind.'

'They're spies—the flower-sellers,' said Francesca. 'They work with the FLN and the *barbouzes*.'

Hassid sighed, and filled his pipe.

'There isn't much more. "The Algeria we know and love has been jointly built by our fathers and grandfathers. The mistakes—even the sins—of one side or the other must be offset by the great constructive achievement in the past of all the communities of Algeria. Yet what a vista of hope lies before us if the cease-fire becomes a reality and peace comes to our stricken land! French Algeria and Moslem Algeria form together the Algerian Algeria of tomorrow. President de Gaulle has set his hand to the task of reconciliation, which means, first and foremost, an end of seditious violence. After that, it means respect for a law which must apply equally to all. The new Algeria must safeguard the rights of Moslem and European——"'

'They'll never respect our rights,' Francesca broke in contemptuously. 'My brother-in-law in the Mitidja with his vegetable gardens and a few olive-trees—do you think they'll let him keep them if there's a cease-fire?'

'Why not?' Hassid asked.

'Because the *fellouzes* say their human rights are to have my brother-in-law's vegetable gardens.'

'But——' Hassid began.

'There's no "buts",' said Francesca. 'If they want your human rights because of *their* human rights, there's no answer—except to fight.' She became angry. 'What about those boys in Bab-el-Oued? They call them fascists because they're fighting for the OAS . . . Two years ago they were Communists. They sent Communist deputies to Paris—like they did in Oran—every election—against the *colons*. Against the *Echo d'Alger*. What do they want—most of them? I'll tell you. They don't want politics. They want to live. They've got human rights too.'

Hassid had begun to suck his pipe, and he said,

'Yes—they've got human rights too. That's why we want to talk to them—to make a start . . . You know, my father—you remember him—he wasn't very pious but he always used to

quote one of the sayings of Rabbi Judah. He said, "Human rights belong to man but lovingkindness to God." And that's what we're trying to say to the people here—Christians, Moslems and Jews. We must try and make a new start—forget our old grievances—and work together for a new Algeria.'

'That's all very well,' said Francesca, still standing. 'But what about the FLN—the *fellouze*?'

Hassid shrugged his shoulders, and put the typescript in his drawer.

'Thank you very much, Francesca,' he said. 'What time are we going to have dinner?'

'In about twenty minutes,' she answered.

She felt dissatisfied. She had answered all the doctor's questions, but she could tell from the droop of his mouth that he was unhappy because of something she had said, and she couldn't understand what it was. She had often heard him denounce the FLN during the last few years, the vein at the side of his forehead darkening with his indignation. So it couldn't have been anything she had said about the *fellouzes* which had changed his expression. She continued to stand in front of him with her glance straying to the carefully arranged table with the Maroquinerie writing-pad, the silver paper-knives and the photograph of Hassid's son in the uniform of an infantry lieutenant. He had the same sombre eyes as Hassid and Eliane, but a more sensual mouth, which was like a contradiction with the mood of his face. The mouth was set, and yet it laughed. It laughed so that as Francesca looked at it, her own mouth relaxed, and the beginning of a smile started at the corner of her lips.

Hassid followed her glance, and said,

'Twenty-two years ago next month. He was a volunteer.'

'He was a good boy,' said Francesca, and when she said the word 'boy' her eyes began to fill with tears.

'Yes, he was a good boy,' said Hassid, and in that second he remembered the voices of Jacques and Eliane as children,

filling the flat with their excitement and delight, the discarded satchels with school-books, the open windows with the noise of the street rising up, peanut sellers and trams, chatter from the cafés, *yaouleds* and whistles, the mooing of the ships leaving port, the warm face of his son close to his shoulder as he helped him to solve a problem in geometry.

'It's a long time ago,' said Hassid. 'The old, Francesca, shouldn't outlive the young . . .'

'If it's the will of God . . .' said Francesca, brushing her eyes with the back of her hand.

'Yes,' said Hassid. 'The lovingkindness of God seems sometimes to work strangely. Let's go and see how the veal is getting on.'

They walked heavily, side by side, to the door.

*

After dinner Hassid, de Croissillon and Eliane sat reading in the drawing-room. The day had been thundery and occasionally Eliane was diverted from *The Goncourt Letters* as a rain squall beat against the windows. De Croissillon read *Le Figaro*, and Hassid was turning over the pages of a pile of medical journals which had unexpectedly arrived from Paris.

'I saw Madame Rollin at the Monoprix,' Eliane said. 'She asked me to play canasta with her tomorrow.'

'Will you?' Hassid asked.

'No,' Eliane said. 'I've got an appointment already.'

De Croissillon put down his newspaper and said,

'If you're not too busy, perhaps you could do something for me.'

'Of course, darling,' Eliane said. 'What is it?'

'I'd like you to go and see a villa near Sidi-Ferruch. It belongs to Mignard—André Mignard. But as he's scuttled off to France, he wants to let it. I met him at the Crillon the other day—boasting about the dangerous life in Algiers.'

'Are you thinking of taking a villa by the sea?' asked Hassid.

'Yes,' said de Croissillon. 'I feel we've imposed on your hospitality——'

'Oh, but it's been a great pleasure,' the doctor answered. 'I see Eliane and you so rarely——'

'You'd still be able to see her—as much as you want to. But Algiers in summer is too hot. I've seen pictures of the villa. It isn't a very big one, but it's exceptionally beautiful. It's extraordinary how these fellows run. He had a note from one of the FLN *willaya* chiefs asking to see him. "What did you do?" I asked him. "I wouldn't condescend to see him," said Mignard, "so I left for France the next day."'

De Croissillon laughed heartily, and then he turned to Eliane who had listened with an abstracted air to his anecdote.

'You don't think that funny?'

'Not really. There's something rather final about getting killed. I can't blame your friend for running while he had the chance.'

'You don't think these approaches by the FLN are as friendly as they seem?'

She looked at his mocking eyes, and said,

'Not when they're made to people like Mignard . . .'

'Do you think,' Hassid asked with an unusual hesitancy, 'that it will be safe for Eliane to be alone in a villa? She'll have to be alone quite a lot, I imagine, since you travel so much. Wouldn't she be better off here?'

De Croissillon walked over to the television set, and passed his hand thoughtfully over the bevelled surface of the screen.

'I don't know,' said de Croissillon. 'I don't know.'

He turned suddenly, and said,

'Eliane—would you mind very much if I had a private word with your father?'

'Why should it be private from me?'

'Only that we both may find it easier to talk in your absence.'

'Yes, go,' said Hassid gently to his daughter. 'I want to talk to Walter. There is something I must discuss with him.'

He offered a cigarette to de Croissillon, and lit a cigar himself. When the door closed behind Eliane, Hassid said,

'All right, Walter. Let's hear what you've got to say.'

De Croissillon fixed his eyes on the piano, and said,

'I'm going to be very frank with you, Dr. Hassid.'

'In that case,' said Hassid, 'you must look me in the face.'

Involuntarily, de Croissillon turned his eyes to Hassid's. Then he looked away again.

'I am anxious about you,' he said.

'Why?'

'Because you're Eliane's father.'

'Why does that give you cause for anxiety?'

'Because,' said de Croissillon, stubbing out his cigarette, 'you're behaving foolishly and you're compromising her.'

'In what way?'

'In half a dozen ways. You've been consorting—unconsciously, I imagine—with the FLN. Si Cada, we now know for certain, was the head of their medical service in Algiers.'

'Si Cada? He's always been an excellent friend of France. He's a doctor—a very fine doctor. I'm certain he's never had anything to do with politics. Look here'—his voice became formal—'I will try and talk to Si Cada——'

'Impossible,' said de Croissillon.

'Why?'

'I heard only this afternoon. He was shot as he was getting into his car in the Boulevard Gambetta by what the Press calls so quaintly "one of his co-religionists". MNA, no doubt.'

'Si Cada,' said Hassid, looking bleakly to the door as if expecting a deliverance to appear from behind it. 'I spoke to him only yesterday.'

'That's how it is,' said de Croissillon.

'I'll telephone the hospital.'

'There are no connections,' said de Croissillon. 'It's the storm or a strike. One or the other.'

Now he was facing Hassid directly.

'It's terrible,' said Hassid. 'Terrible! Si Cada! There comes a time when you envy the dead.'

He stood up. 'You must take Eliane away from Algiers. It's no good for her to be here. Take her away.'

'It's what I want to do.'

'But not to Sidi-Ferruch. Take her back to Paris. Take her as quickly as you can. It's no good here any more. They're murdering everything that's best. Take her, Walter—I want you to take her back.'

'Oh, no,' said de Croissillon coldly. 'That's quite out of the question. I've at least three months' work, and Eliane as a good wife wants to be with me. Mind you, I do feel she ought to have some war work.'

Hassid had turned his back on de Croissillon in order to chew a trinitrin pill. When he faced him again he was composed, although he felt difficulty in breathing.

'War work? I hope the cease-fire will make that unnecessary.'

'There won't be a cease-fire. The struggle for a French Algeria must go on. There'll be many more casualties before there's a cease-fire. I'd like Eliane to work with one of the Relief Committees for European Victims of de Gaulle. The ones interned at Ouargla, for example. You sympathize with them, don't you, Dr. Hassid? You've often told me how much you objected to being sent in chains to the Sahara. How do you feel about your fellow-citizens in de Gaulle's concentration camps?'

De Croissillon's smooth, handsome face had become puckered with his effort to control the malice which had entered his voice, and Hassid, drawing himself up, confronted him with a sense of advantage in their argument.

'You're abusing language, my dear fellow,' he said, enjoying the anger in his son-in-law's face at his patronizing tone. 'If by concentration camp you mean places like Dachau and Belsen, then there's nothing in Algeria to compare with them. I'm

against prisons except for criminals. That's why I objected when Giraud sent me to one of his camps. My only crime was to help the Allied landings.'

'But that was a form of treachery——'

'Not to the only French Government I recognized—and that was de Gaulle's.'

'That's very interesting,' said de Croissillon, like a boxer who, after a flurry of blows on the ropes, resumes a cautious defence. 'Let's suppose that some of these people who've been interned don't recognize de Gaulle's Government today. Let's assume—just for the sake of argument—that they're constitutional democrats of the Fourth Republic, and don't accept the legitimacy of the Fifth. What then? Do you accept their right to resist?'

At ease in these speculations, Hassid took his seat again as if in preparation for an academic debate.

'Philosophically, yes,' he said. 'I believe that everyone has the right—even the duty of rebellion in certain circumstances. There are two Forums—the one outside and the one inside. And when the one inside protests against a tyranny, there is an absolute duty to rebel.'

'So you accept that the detainees deserve sympathy—perhaps even Eliane's.'

'As people they have my sympathy,' said Hassid. 'But that's where it's got to end. I think their cause is wrong.'

'You mean you have a double standard—like the opponents of capital punishment who want to hang no one except their political enemies.'

'No,' said Hassid sadly, 'I want to spare everyone—including our political enemies. Our prisons are bursting with criminals and political suspects of every kind—FLN and OAS——'

'You equate the two?' de Croissillon asked sharply.

'Unhappily, yes,' said Hassid. 'They are two evils, the counterpart of each other.'

'You find nothing to choose between the two?'

'Nothing. The OAS grew out of the FLN. That is all. I can see that each summoned up noble purposes in their followers—the fight for independence in one, a patriotic struggle in the other. But it's all become disfigured—it's all become hideous.'

As Hassid spoke the last words, de Croissillon rose, opened the door to make sure that they were private, and returned to the table where he poured himself a whisky and soda. He drank half the glass, and said to Hassid,

'Those are your views, and I can see you won't change them. But there is one thing I want to ask you—and it's for Eliane as much as yourself.'

'If it's for Eliane,' said Hassid, 'I would do anything within my power.'

'This is within your power.'

'I must know what it is.'

Hassid followed de Croissillon with his eyes as he walked across the room and pulled the curtains apart to look out into the night. He stood for a few moments staring down into the deserted Rue Michelet, and when he spoke again, his voice had some of the dreariness of the rainswept street.

'For Eliane's sake, Dr. Hassid, I hope you'll give up your chairmanship of this new movement—'

'The PPPP?'

'—that's it. I hope you'll chuck it completely. Leave it alone—and go and live for six months in France.'

Hassid looked at him in astonishment.

'You mean—give up the chairmanship—at this moment when the movement is just about to get on its feet?'

'I'm asking you to do just that—and to do it before it's too late.'

'But, my dear de Croissillon, you're out of your mind. This is likely to be the most significant development since the peace-talks were first thought of. We've already got the interest of the employers' associations and some of the trade unions.'

De Croissillon scraped a fleck of dust from his lapel with his finger, and said,

'That's very interesting. Who?'

'Boutard—Gibello—there are others.'

'I see. What's the programme? Capitulation?'

'No,' said Hassid, ignoring the jibe. 'Co-operation—the co-operation of the communities. It's de Gaulle's theme.'

De Croissillon came and sat on a chair in front of Hassid so that their knees almost touched. Then he leaned forward and said,

'Listen. I'm not going to argue with you. I'm telling you this as solemnly as I can. If you want Eliane to have a father, you must give up the chairmanship and have nothing more to do with it.'

Hassid shook his head.

'Impossible. I've accepted.'

De Croissillon stood, and said,

'Very well. As soon as it is convenient, Eliane and I will move to the Aletti. Don't see her in public or let her drive with you in her car or yours.'

'Why not?'

'Because you are now in serious trouble, Dr. Hassid.'

Hassid shook his head, and said with a melancholy determination,

'It would be easy for me to give it up—to use some reason like being too old or ill as an excuse for letting someone else do the job. But you see, it's my responsibility. We've both been soldiers in our time . . . This is my duty. I've accepted. I'm sorry. I can't back out of it now.'

His manner was half-apologetic as if he felt disobliging to de Croissillon who had tried to help him.

'I'm sorry,' said de Croissillon. 'Good night!'

'Have you had your talk?' Eliane asked, appearing at the door.

'We had a very interesting philosophical discussion,' said Hassid.

'What conclusions did you come to?' Eliane asked gaily.

'None,' said de Croissillon, unsmiling.

'Oh, yes,' said Hassid. 'We decided that philosophy is inconclusive. But it's a great help on the way.'

CHAPTER X

AT ten to three the Botanical Gardens were deserted, and du Pré stood by the araucaria wondering whether Eliane would approach through one of the avenues of palm-trees or from the huge statue with the garlanded spear facing seaward from the terrace. The trees were nearly as old as the French occupation; coconuts, bamboos and platans had taken root as if native to the soil. And the figure of France dominating the bay was a symbol of victory designed to last a thousand years. In the tranquil early afternoon, it was easy to believe that a settled peace had come. The sea at the end of the mile-long alleyway leading from the lake was motionless, and after the turbulent night the sky had been washed of cloud and shimmered in a haze with the horizon, its stillness confirmed by a thin, perpendicular column of smoke rising from a factory chimney. Du Pré, who had arrived half an hour early for his appointment, had seen no one except an old attendant with a cap and walking-stick whom he dimly remembered as having been there when he had visited the gardens with Eliane during the war.

The afternoon was somnolent, the only sounds a counterpoint between doves and cicadas with a bourdon of insects. Du Pré, his arms on an urn filled with tumbling geraniums, shut his eyes as he raised his face to the sun. He thought that most of his adult life had been spent in war, but that his whole involvement had really been a search for peace, and that this hour of peace was only a leave, and that each leave made the return to the city more difficult, and that despite everything, he had no wish to be anywhere else but in the Botanical Gardens, waiting. In the springtime scents he recalled the sweat of the Twist Club, Véronique dancing and dancing with

her false enthusiasms in joyless afternoons and Armidal, who at five o'clock would be arrested, sullen in the middle of his gang. On such a day the OAS had lined up the social workers of El Biar against the wall at the rear of the villa, and murdered them with sub-machine-guns. He had gone there with Inspector Beaugès shortly after the massacre had been reported. By the time he had arrived and seen the trampled flower-beds and the pitted walls, the dead had been laid out in a mortuary at the police-station; he had stood behind the relatives until it was the turn of the two women teachers to be identified, and he had left. By night, Armidal would be at the Villa Rouchard. And that was the end of his own part in it. The murderers would be condemned, perhaps sentenced to life imprisonment, and then amnestied. So it had been with the FLN. So it would be with the OAS. And du Pré thought of the women teachers, and placed his hand on the revolver under his jacket.

In Paris, before he had been recalled, he had been engaged in writing a monograph on Georges Braque. Now at last he could understand why in the middle of a war whose horrors the artist had personally experienced he had turned to the placid contemplation of gueridons, mandolins and pieces of newspaper. Du Pré opened his eyes and saw the water-lilies floating on the pale-green slime of the lake, and for a moment he remembered the white birds flying across a sky like the evanescence of youth.

'You look very solemn,' said Eliane, coming up behind him.

'Not any longer,' said du Pré. 'I was afraid you mightn't come—or that something might have happened to stop you coming.'

'I would have been here earlier,' said Eliane, 'but I changed my dress twice.'

He looked at her dark hair with its golden lights in the sunshine, and at her arms, made browner by their contrast with her primrose dress, and at her sandalled feet. And then he looked at her face, and Eliane said,

'Don't look at me.'

‘Why not?’

She took his arm and said,

‘I look dreadful. Come on, Robert, let’s walk.’

They walked a few paces till he paused and said,

‘Why do you think you look dreadful?’

She smiled up at him, and said,

‘Because I didn’t sleep at all last night. And because I wanted to look particularly nice today.’

‘You’re flirting with me.’

‘No,’ she said quickly. ‘No. I’m not flirting with you. I just wanted to feel normal—to get away from the awful insanity of Algiers.’

Du Pré drew her from the path into the shade of a tall cedar-tree, and leaning against it, turned her face up to him.

‘Is there anything special that’s worrying you, Eliane? Is there anything——’

‘Oh, no. It’s not specific. It’s everything. All I want to do is to be somewhere away from all the violence and the chance of sudden death. I don’t want to have to worry about my father all the time. I don’t want to live any more in this atmosphere of hatred and mistrust—never knowing where one’s loyalties lie—oh, all that! Don’t you ever feel like that?’

‘Do I?’ du Pré asked as if to himself. ‘I really don’t know. I seem to have lived all my life in that atmosphere.’

She was standing on the exposed roots of the tree, and she steadied herself by putting her hand on his arm.

‘It’s curious,’ she said. ‘When I was a girl I used to long to live in a villa by the sea. Daddy’s work always kept him in Algiers, and his relatives were mostly in Oran. But I used to dream that we lived in a villa in Sidi-Ferruch—a villa with a Roman colonnade covered with bougainvillaea. I wanted to live in that villa, all alone with someone I loved very much——’

‘And now?’

‘Now I have the chance to live in Sidi-Ferruch. Walter wants us to leave Daddy’s flat and take a villa.’

'Will you?'

'I think I'll have to.'

'Aren't you pleased at the prospect?'

She took a step away from him, and said,

'No—I don't want to leave Daddy with all those vague threats around him. He never lets anyone see that he's afraid. But he must be. How can anyone not be afraid when they're menaced as Daddy has been?'

'They won't harm him,' said du Pré. 'I'm sure of it. They saw the reaction abroad——' He broke off his sentence in the middle but seeing her anxiety he continued.

'The OAS saw the reaction abroad when they murdered the social workers at El Biar.'

'But they couldn't——'

'No, they couldn't.'

The strain faded from her eyes, and she said,

'It's stupid of me, Robert—but I do have such faith in your understanding. I think that if you said that banana-tree was a fig-tree I'd believe you.'

'As a matter of fact, it *is* a fig-tree.'

They both laughed, and du Pré said,

'How long can you stay with me?'

'As long as you'll have me. Would you like to drive with me to Sidi-Ferruch to see that villa?'

'Which one?' du Pré asked. 'The one you don't want?'

'No,' said Eliane, her eyes solemn. 'The one I used to think about when I was a girl—the beautiful one with Roman colonnades and bougainvillaea.'

Du Pré drew her close to him, and laid his face against her hair, and felt with his fingers the warmth of her bare arms. Over her shoulder he could see the deserted paths leading downwards to the shore, the lake with its nenuphars, and the silent trees. He moved her forehead against his cheek and felt her eyebrows under his mouth and he wanted to speak.

And then a harsh voice interrupted them.

'There are severe penalties for love-making in the Botanical Gardens.'

The old attendant was emphasizing each word with a spiteful shake of his stick.

Du Pré smiled to Eliane, and they laughed together, and as they walked arm-in-arm down the terraces to where he had parked his car, they chanted in duet,

'There are severe penalties for love-making in the Botanical Gardens.'

*

Near Sidi-Ferruch, they stopped for a drink at a restaurant on the edge of the pine-forest overlooking the straw huts of the plage. The proprietor had linked the branches of three lime-trees into an arbour, and the voices from the beach and the sounds of traffic from the coastal road reached them only as a far-off hum. Beneath the pines a group of men in shirt-sleeves, watched by their critical children, were playing *pétanque*, while at a neighbouring table, three women in black drank coffee without talking to each other.

'Listen!' said Eliane. 'It could be France. Somewhere in the south—the voices, the smell of *pastis* and coffee, the sound of the boules. In the city, I sometimes feel that there's no point in hanging on. But here, and in the *bled*, it's different.'

'Are you at home here as you are in France?'

'This is my home,' said Eliane. 'In Paris I feel a provincial—a very comfortable one. But what about you? Are you at home here?'

Du Pré hesitated, and put his hand over hers as she played with a folder of matches.

'I am at home here,' he said.

'And your wife?'

He hesitated again, and then he said,

'I have been happy with my wife. I don't want to deny my happiness with her—not even to explain—to try and explain,

Eliane, why I am at home here—or in the Botanical Gardens, or in your father's flat—or wherever else you may be.'

'But your wife,' she insisted.

'My wife—that has a separate quality. I can't define it.'

'No,' said Eliane, and she smiled faintly. 'Don't define it. I can understand why Moslems regard monogamy as the great myth of Western society.'

'It isn't that, either.'

'Well, describe her to me. I'm curious to know.'

'How shall I describe her—what she looks like?'

'Yes—is she terribly attractive?'

Du Pré frowned and tried to conjure up his wife's face, but the contours and colours had become blurred. A tactile memory retained in his fingertips the sense of her shoulders, the texture of her hair and her skin, but when he tried to imagine her appearance, all that he could recall was the photograph on the table at the Hôtel de l'Angleterre.

'Louise? She's pretty—rather pretty.'

'Blonde or dark?'

'Fairish.'

'What else?'

'She's a very good skier.'

And as he thought how best he could describe her, the images followed one another of Louise bending over the children at Megève to help them on with their boots, preoccupied at Le Lavandou with their wet bathing-costumes on the beach, and the last few years, tired, settled, the shape of her married life determined for all her future, excited by his home-coming, then taking his presence for granted, rousing herself only when Philipon or Guyard or one of the others came to dinner and she recovered the blonde coquetry which at first she had reserved for him.

'And do you ski?' Eliane asked him.

'I can ski,' he said, 'but it isn't my favourite sport.'

'I'm glad,' she said. 'I hate ski-ing.'

'You would have got on well with my grandfather,' said du Pré. 'He was a peasant from the Dordogne, and he hated sport of every kind—especially for women.'

'What about your father?'

'He was different—he emigrated to Paris—that's how my grandfather used to put it—and taught at the Ecole Normale. He was a very civilized man—tolerant of everybody.'

She hesitated, and asked,

'Is he still alive?'

'No,' said du Pré, 'he died during the Occupation. He was head of the Catholic Rescue Union—they deported him to Germany, and he died in a camp near Munich . . . I think one of the reasons I liked your father was that he reminded me of my own.'

'In what way?' Eliane asked.

'They both could solve the most abstruse philosophical and scientific problems but neither of them could mend a fuse. They could tell you in detail the route that Hannibal took when he crossed the Alps—but not the way through the suburbs. It's a kind of unworldliness.'

'No, it isn't that,' said Eliane. 'I think it's a kind of other-worldliness. It's a kind of impatience with the things that are transitory.'

'But everything that we're certain of is transitory,' said du Pré. 'All the rest is faith.'

The three women in black rose, and left their table. One of them had been weeping, and her reddened, suffused face was a contrast with the holiday air of the restaurant.

'People with faith are lucky,' said Eliane. 'I'm afraid that I belong to the second generation of rationalists. I never could understand how a doctor can be anything but a rationalist.'

Du Pré followed the women with his eyes as they left, and said,

'I think the exact opposite. How can a doctor see our fragile bodies and not have faith?'

With a change of mood, Eliane said,
'You're not fragile. You're one of the solidest-looking men
I've ever known.'

They laughed, and du Pré said,
'Now tell me something about yourself.'
The smile ebbed from Eliane's eyes, and she said,
'I think you know it all . . . I'm married. I was happy—and
sometimes, I'm still happy.'

'Were you happy in Paris with your husband?' du Pré asked
bluntly.

Eliane answered,
'At first—yes. He was very gay—we had lots of friends. We
travelled. We entertained. There were the children.'

'But your own friends—Kahan, Goussard, Françoise Pic,
Corrèze——'

'Heavens,' said Eliane, 'you said that like a dossier.'

'How did your husband get on with them?'

'How did you know they were my friends?'

'Your father has spoken to me about them often. I can't
imagine de Croissillon getting on very well with all those
liberals, radicals and socialists.'

Eliane laughed.

'He loathed them. But there it is. His father was one of the
leading anti-Dreyfusards. An Army colonel. And when Dreyfus
was finally acquitted, he emigrated in disgust to Australia, and
bred horses. He then came back in 1916, went through the
war without a scratch, married and raised a large family,
most of whom have got killed in one way or another in the
years between.'

'And now?'

'Now,' said Eliane, 'now—it's somehow like a print which
hasn't been properly developed. Everything has darkened and
at the same time faded and changed. I was very happy in our
first few years. I loved him. I think he loved me very much.'

'I think,' said du Pré, 'he loves you very much still.'

She shrugged her shoulders.

'Why are we asking each other these questions?'

Du Pré didn't answer, and paid the bill. The proprietor who was standing at his elbow said,

'Is everything satisfactory, sir?'

'Oh, yes—yes,' said du Pré. 'Where is the Villa Mignard?'

'You go past the Memorial, and turn left by the pine-trees. It's empty, of course. M. Mignard left recently for Paris.'

'Yes,' said Eliane, 'my husband and I are thinking of taking it for the summer.'

'You will both be very welcome,' said the proprietor, addressing himself to du Pré. 'It is one of the most beautiful villas on the peninsula.'

'You see,' said Eliane as they left the restaurant, 'you are now compromised.'

'Yes, please,' said du Pré.

Eliane took his arm, and they ran down the path to the main road.

*

They entered the villa cautiously. The mosaic floor of the inner courtyard was hot underfoot, and the fountains, turned off when Mignard abandoned his home, had become a cemetery of flies. The hydrangeas had shrivelled, and of the plants only the succulents retained a defiant plumpness. Eliane pushed the door, and immediately they felt the stale, cold breath of the shuttered drawing-room. Chairs, tables, pictures and carpets slowly declared themselves in the half-light. A glass case had been emptied of its *objets d'art*. A pallid surface against the blue silk wall-covering showed where a picture had hung, and the torn picture-rail, trailing from the plaster, was evidence of how hurriedly it had been removed. The cushions still bore the impress of those who a week or two earlier had lounged against them, and on the table were three glasses from which the liquid had evaporated, leaving an amber sediment.

Eliane threw open the shutters, and the room became in-

habited again. The unemptied ashtrays seemed to be waiting for further use. The pretty rococo clock, stopped for many days, looked ready to chime the hours. And the magazines, *Réalités* and *Elle*, lay open on the table, ready for guests. Du Pré closed the pages, and said,

'I'd like to bet you won't find a single book in this house.'

'Not even the Racing Calendar,' said Eliane.

'No, not even that. Men like Mignard carry it all in their heads.'

'It's such a beautiful villa,' said Eliane.

They walked from room to room with Eliane opening the shutters one by one so that the sunlight burst torrentially into the shadows and the musty air stirred and a freshness began to blow in from the sea. A curving marble staircase led to the upper rooms, and they climbed the steps, their heels clicking against the stone as they went.

The main bedroom of the villa was surrounded by a hemisphere of glass windows, electrically opened and closed by a switch near the door. Du Pré pressed it, and immediately the windows swung apart, allowing them to go straight from the room through a portico of Corinthian columns, trailing purple blossom, to a terrace overlooking the sea.

'You see, Robert,' said Eliane, holding his arm tightly, 'this is my villa—this is the one I used to think about when I was at school—when I went to bed—in the war.'

'What did you think about it?' said du Pré, looking at the trace of sweat on her forehead under the afternoon sun.

'I imagined,' said Eliane, 'that I'd be standing on a balcony like this—looking at the sea—and I'd recite to myself Verlaine's poem.'

'Which one?'

'The one about the familiar dream—the strange and familiar dream of a person one could love and be loved by, and who isn't always quite the same, and yet who isn't different, either—the person who would understand——'

She stopped, and smiled, and added,
'The schoolgirl's familiar dream.'
Du Pré took her face in his hands, and said,
'It's the universal dream.'
She no longer smiled, and du Pré said,
'It was my own dream—my dream in the war, in Indo-China and my dream in Paris in the last ten years. But it wasn't a strange dream. You must know, Eliane——'

She looked at him steadily, and said,
'I don't know. You must tell me.'
'I think,' said du Pré, 'there wasn't a single day of my life after I first met you that you haven't been somewhere in my thoughts or my feelings, from the time when I used to sit and watch you surrounded by officers in your father's flat. After you were married—after my own marriage—I always remembered you as someone I could have loved and been happy with.'

Eliane turned away from him, her eyes on a yacht which was drawing an arc of white foam on the sea.

'I'm glad I didn't know.'
'Why?'
'Why? Because afterwards—long afterwards when I already had children—when, like other women, I used to think how my life might have been if instead of this or that, I'd done something else—I always thought of you. And if I'd known that I even crossed your mind, Robert, I——'

'What?'
'I would have been unsettled . . . As it was, you remained a sort of reverie. I used to imagine how one day in Paris, there'd be a ring at the door-bell——'

'Well, it happened in Algiers instead.'
'—and that I would answer it because the maid would be away, and Walter would be in Switzerland or Casablanca or Beaulieu or somewhere.'

'Francesca answered the door,' said du Pré.
'Yes,' she said thoughtfully, 'but it was different.'

'What happened then in your dream?'

'You'd come in, and say, "Hello, Eliane, you haven't changed."'

Du Pré put his arm around her shoulders, and as she rested her head against him, they began to walk slowly back along the colonnade.

'And what did you say?'

'I'd say something clever, like "We've both changed, but we're the same."'

'And then?'

A pucker had come between her eyebrows.

'Oh, then it would be very vague. A sort of sad, unsatisfied nostalgia till the ordinary, daily things drowned it.'

They had reached the room, and du Pré said,

'For me it was different. I knew I would see you again if I did something about it. So when I heard you were in Algiers and there was the chance of coming here, I took it. And when I had been in the city only one day, I called on you.'

He came close to her and tried to raise her face to his own but she drew away from him.

'What is it, Eliane?' he asked.

She shook her head.

'I don't know—I'm afraid, Robert.'

'Of me?'

'No.'

'Of your husband?'

'No.'

'What are you afraid of?'

She returned to him, and put her arms around his waist inside his open jacket and said,

'I'm afraid I mightn't please you.'

*

At five o'clock Dr. Hassid, who had spent the afternoon resting, decided that he would shop. Putting on his Panama

hat and taking his ivory walking-stick he limped from window to window in the Rue Michelet, preoccupied with the thought that he had to get the football before closing time, and uncertain where he could find one. As he walked, he gave a vague salute to the woman in the newspaper kiosk, to the shopkeepers who greeted him respectfully and to the occasional passers-by who knew him as an institutional figure of the district.

From early morning the day had been disturbed by ambulances and fire-engines hurrying through the streets as OAS attacks multiplied with the reports from Evian that an agreement on a cease-fire would soon be announced. Hassid had already made his prognosis of events. He was convinced that after a flurry of acute violence like the crisis of a fever, the Europeans would acquiesce in Algeria's new status. At the end of his Committee's first meeting, he had said, 'We need patience and endurance, and all will be well.'

He found himself outside an athletic outfitter's shop, and he shook hands with the owner, a portly but worried-looking man of sixty, who made his standard joke when he saw the doctor.

'Can I sell you some dumb-bells, Dr. Hassid?'

And Hassid replied as usual,

'No—but you can sell me a football.'

Wondering why he hadn't thought of this shop in the first place, he went inside, sniffing appreciatively at the leathery smell that came from its shelves where tennis rackets, footballs, wallets, blotters, boxes and gramophone records were neatly stacked.

'Can you sell me a football, Rahel?' he asked Hayim's daughter who was arranging a stack of underwater fishing equipment.

She smiled shyly from him to her father to see if the doctor was joking, and said,

'What size do you want—full size or half size?'

'I think full size,' said Hassid. 'I want it for a little boy.'

'It'll be heavy for him to kick,' said Hayim who now took the doctor's purchase seriously.

'It won't matter' said Hassid. 'It won't matter. . . . Well, tell me, Rahel, when are you going for your holidays?'

'If only we could go tomorrow,' said Hayim. 'I want to send her to France, but unless you've got influence——!' He shook his head. 'It's no good here any more. We Europeans are finished—the Jews more so than anyone else. As usual!'

'Nonsense,' said Hassid. 'There'll be guarantees under the Evian agreements—you mark my words. Joxe isn't a fool.'

'It's paper,' said Hayim. 'The leaders will make agreements. Perhaps they'll intend to keep them. But when the French go, the Moslems will come out of their casbahs and *mechtas*—they'll kill and plunder. You'll see! I was in Sétif in 1945—you'll see!'

'Sétif,' said Hassid, 'that's when it all began. That's the real beginning of the rebellion. If it hadn't been for the reprisals, there wouldn't have been this bitterness.'

Hayim had begun to pump up a deflated football, and as he did so, he said to the doctor,

'Do you think you could get permission for Rahel to leave? You have influence.'

'All she has to do is go to the Commissariat. She'll have to queue for a little—and then she'll get a visa.'

'I mean an OAS visa,' said Hayim, pumping vigorously.

'It's not a visa I recognize,' said Hassid.

'No, but your son-in-law, Comte de Croissillon, he knows them all.'

'How much is that, Rahel?' Hassid asked, ignoring Hayim. She told him, and he paid, and hobbled with the football under his arm to the old Delage which he kept in the street outside his flat.

He drove fast, his cheeks flushed with indignation at Hayim's impertinence. But when he reached the suburbs of the city his anger began to fade. It was natural, after all, that a father should try to protect his daughter. And if the public couldn't

leave Algiers without permission from the OAS, how could he blame Hayim for discarding any sense of shame in a desperate effort to make contact with someone who could help his daughter? Hassid could still see him pumping the football, and asking with his eyes downcast for de Croissillon's intervention. Comte de Croissillon! What would his grandfather, the patriarchal Rabbi of Constantine for twenty-three years before he died—what would he have made of the Comte de Croissillon? Or, for that matter, what did Eliane make of him? She had wanted to set out on the new and flattering experience of marriage to a man who was an image of chivalry. But what had happened in the years between? She had never complained. She had always loyally sided with her husband when there had been differences with her father or anyone else. Yet how could she put up with the intellectual and political sclerosis of the man which increased with each year? His favourite reading was the military magazine, the *Bled*. He never read anything which wasn't directly concerned with action. Philosophic speculation he regarded with contempt; economics with distaste. Applied medicine he respected, and he had a certain deference towards surgery, which he considered an important branch of the mechanical sciences. But he wasn't stupid. Oh, no! He was an excellent administrator. That was his craft, and involuntarily Hassid felt an impulse of admiration for his son-in-law who, whatever he administered, did it well. In the last few weeks, though he had become certain that de Croissillon was linked with the OAS, he had imagined that only he had arrived at that conclusion. But from the way Hayim spoke, it was clear that it was as generally known of him as it was of de Vauban, Holzheimer, Courvel-Lesueur and Jacquard, none of whom had made any secret of their sympathies. Hassid wondered how much Eliane knew or guessed, and how much the knowledge affected her. 'The OAS isn't a movement,' she had said at a party. 'It's a plague.' De Croissillon, who was playing cards, had looked up and said, 'Bravo, Eliane! You

must send that to Mister de Gaulle. He's running out of phrases.'

*

When the Bel Air Clinic came into view, a white, double-storeyed building set in a park with a swimming-pool for paraplegic and orthopaedic patients which his father had built forty years earlier and which he had extended soon after the war, Hassid in a disciplined habit focused his mind on his patients. Each case was familiar to him, recorded with its history like a speech in an actor's memory.

The Moslem porter, Tayeb, who had been with the Clinic since its foundation, opened the gates as he saw the Delage approaching, and locked them as soon as it had passed. Hassid gave him a wave, and drove along the gravelled path to the forecourt where three patients were sitting in wheel-chairs. They had been practising the archery which Hassid encouraged among the paraplegics, and their quivers, still containing arrows, protruded behind their heads as if their chairs were some mechanized vehicle for tribal warfare. Hearing the sound of the car on the path, they smiled to Hassid, who got out and raised his hat gravely to each of them in turn, clutching the football under his left arm.

Dr. Gazier, in her serene white overall, came from the cool interior of the clinic to welcome him at the door.

'Everything in order?' he asked.

'Everything's in order,' she answered. 'Two new admissions this morning. Bullet wounds.'

She looked at him calmly, waiting for him to comment, but he merely said,

'You have all the details.'

'Yes,' she said.

He looked again at her calm face, nun-like in its aureole of short grey hair, and said,

'There's no choice,' and she, following the ellipsis of his thought, answered,

‘No—none at all.’

She accompanied him in his walk through the rooms, pausing from time to time to discuss each patient’s condition or standing discreetly in the background while Hassid listened to complaints, his head nodding sympathetically at accounts of meals not delivered on time or windows kept open when they might have been shut or the impossibility of getting prompt attention from the nursing staff. Each time Hassid stood attentively at the bedside till the patient had exhausted the complaint. Then he said,

‘Dr. Gazier will deal with the matter.’

His voice was vigorous and reassuring and after his visits the sick slept more soundly and the convalescent felt strong.

When he entered Salem’s room—a cool, lime-green room with a gay anthropomorphic frieze of fairy-tale animals, camels and elephants and dogs which he kept especially for children—the shutters were drawn and only the leaks of sunlight through the slats gave any indication of the hot day outside. The boy lay with one thin brow arm flung over the ruffled sheet. His eyes were closed, but every now and again he would press his face into the pillow, muttering.

Dr. Gazier showed Hassid the temperature chart, and in the room’s twilight, Hassid studied it by raising it close to his eyes.

‘Do you change the posture?’ he asked Dr. Gazier.

‘Yes,’ she said, ‘as you instructed.’

‘It’s important,’ said Hassid. ‘Very important . . . How is his mood?’

‘Apathetic—I believe there’s a renal deficiency.’

‘I want to examine him.’

Hassid put his fingers lightly on the boy’s brow. It was wet, and strands of black hair lay like the end of a frayed rope over his forehead.

‘Salem!’ he said quietly. ‘Salem!’

The child stirred and moved his lips.

‘Salem!’ Hassid said in a louder voice.

The boy half-opened his eyes, and for a few seconds looked at the doctor without recognition, then turned his face away unsmilingly.

'Look!' said Hassid in Arabic, taking a chair by the side of the bed. 'I've brought you a football—a real one.'

Salem slowly opened his eyes, and this time he recognized the doctor and smiled. Hassid smiled back at him, and bounced the ball on the floor.

'Look,' he said, 'it's a football—a real football. Would you like to hold it?'

'Yes,' said the boy.

'Ahmed Hakim gave it to me,' the doctor said, 'and he asked me specially to give it to you. It's the ball he played with in the match against Bordeaux.' Refreshed by Salem's response to his further inventions, Hassid said, 'He said he'll come and see you soon.'

The ball fell from the boy's hands onto the polished floor, bumping to rest with a diminishing tattoo. Dr. Gazier picked it up, but when she went to give it back to him he had already turned his face solemn and fevered to the pillow, muttering in Arabic, remote from the clinic, restored to the world of his brief childhood, to the Saddler's Street and the storytellers and his friends Chadli and Bensaad and Houar and the *yaouleds* in the Place du Gouvernement who had been replaced by the monsters on the wall, the camels and the elephants and the dogs with faces like people, which came out to chase him and trample him and tear at his body: he wanted to run from them, but his legs wouldn't move.

*

The evening air had suddenly cooled, and du Pré awoke, confused and uncertain of his surroundings, the chill of the silk bed-coverings against his body, total silence, the scent of the woman's moist shoulder and his own lassitude adding to his disorientation. He put out his hand, and traced the line of her breast and moved his fingers along her flank, and the day

became lucid again, the room a refuge and the woman a familiar. She stirred and turned, and touched his face and shoulders, and gravely they studied each other in the darkening room. They spoke each other's names, and it was an intimacy.

'What time is it, Robert?' she asked him.

He looked at his wrist-watch behind her head, and said, 'It's nearly seven.'

She raised herself up, and passed her hands through her disordered hair, and drooped her head till it touched her drawn-up knees.

'We must go.'

'Not yet.'

'I don't want to go.'

He raised himself from the bed, and began to dress rapidly. When he had put his shirt and trousers on, he came and sat next to her, and laid his arms around her shoulders as she sat still clinging to her knees.

'Eliane,' he said.

'I don't want to go back,' she said, and rested her head on his shoulder for a few seconds, till she looked up and said mockingly,

'You're in a hurry to get back. You want to go to confession.'

He drew away from her so that he could contemplate her more easily.

'No,' he said, and slowly kissed the side of her knee. 'I can't go to confession.'

She stood quickly, and as he rose and held her, her naked back and his arms were reflected and multiplied in the looking-glasses which formed a hemisphere in counterpart to the windows.

'What is it, Eliane?' du Pré asked her, feeling the trembling of her body.

And she answered,

'I don't know, Robert . . . I love you, and I'm afraid.'

'Why?'

'For you—for me—for all of us.'

CHAPTER XI

THE lieutenant at his elbow had travelled with the French army in the Yatagan Commando from Indo-China, and arrived without surprise in North Africa. From his father he had inherited the surname Brenet, his stature and his loyalty to France; from his mother the forename Vinh, after a Cambodian king, his straight narrow eyes and his devoutness. Educated at a missionary school in Hanoi, he felt at ease among Frenchmen and had worked for the External Documentation Service in the fight against the enemy with an uncomplicated enthusiasm. In Indo-China 'they' had been the Communists; in Algeria 'they' were the Moslem rebels, the FLN. Assigned at first to field work, his job had been to sit in cafés and collect information about FLN sympathizers. Each night he would send a report to the Villa Rouchard from where it would be distributed in quintuplicate to the Sûreté Nationale at the Ministry of the Interior and the Deuxième Bureau of the chiefs of staff.

Recently his duties had become more complex. The OAS had been added to the enemy, and the Vietnamese in Algeria had become identified as part of the anti-OAS Intelligence Service. Four had been murdered within a week. He had therefore been taken from what his superiors called the Anisette Circuit and attached to headquarters at the Villa Rouchard, a house in Birmandreis with an overgrown garden set well back from the main road and avoided by Moslems and Europeans alike. In the neighbourhood it was never called by its proper name. The constant movement of cars after curfew, the guards in civilian clothes at the entrance and the aloofness of its changing occupants stripped it of any domestic personality. In

the cafés of Birmandreis they called it 'The Barbouze Palace' and told stories about it in bitter undertones.

When du Pré arrived at the Villa Rouchard, Vinh who had acquired some experience in interrogation was put on his staff. Intelligence officers from Metropolitan France had come and gone in a rapid alternation, since in Algiers it was never long before a new face was marked as a friend or an enemy. Most of them stayed in small hotels or pensions for their three months' tour of duty; as commercial travellers, factory consultants, motor salesmen, railway inspectors and insurance agents, they lived watchful days in the city and assembled at judicious intervals in the villa at night, where an army colonel under the pseudonym of Carnot organized their operations.

Standing behind du Pré, who had sat himself at the trestle-table, Vinh handed him the day's journal. Du Pré read it with a frown.

'7 hours; Rue Gustave Doré at the Redoubt. A Moslem taxi driver, M. Ahmed Melbani—killed by a bullet in the head by unknown assailants. 7 hours 20. At Bab-el-Oued, Avenue Malakoff—a Moslem driver, M. Mustapha Mezli, aged 27—killed at the wheel of his employer's Estafette by unidentified killers.'

Du Pré put the paper down and said,

'That's a familiar name.'

'He was the last Moslem of Bab-el-Oued,' said Vinh. 'The one they protected to show their tolerance.'

'Why did they kill him?'

'Because they couldn't be bothered with exceptions.'

Du Pré read on.

'8 hours 10. On the railway line near the Caroubier race-course at Hussein Dey, unidentified assailants fired on European railwaymen. Two of the latter, M. Gaston Gloriot and Jean-Baptiste Molina, were killed. A third, M. Antoine Espósito, was wounded. 8 hours 58. Rue Dupuch (Central Algiers),

a European trader, M. Girard, was wounded by several shots. At the same time in El Biar, a Moslem civil servant, M. Ben Amour Si Roffa, 28, was seriously wounded. 9 hours 05. Birmandiers, Rue du Commandant Coutarel, a European, M. Robert Goutmine, manager of the Cîne Golf, was seriously wounded.'

'Isn't that quite near?' du Pré asked.

'Two hundred yards away,' said Vinh. 'We heard the shots—stood to—but that was the end of it.'

Du Pré continued to scan the list till he stopped at 15 hours 20.

'A terrorist threw a hand-grenade into a shop at Bel Air. Three people were wounded; the owner M. Scotto, 53, Mme Geneviève Fec, 37, and her little girl of three. 16 hours. Rue Bourlon, a European businessman, M. Frédéric Lechamp, was killed. 16 hours 45. At Maison-Varrée, a tobacconist of Italian origin, M. Luigi Prias, was killed by an FLN terrorist.'

He put the journal down, and said,

'It's been a busy day.'

'Very busy,' said Vinh.

'And Armidal?'

'No trouble at all. He was in the Hi-Fi Club, so we sent Miki in to tell him there was a girl outside wanted to talk to him . . . We shoved him in the car, and that was it. Funny what some men will do for a woman!'

'Yes,' said du Pré. 'It is funny. Has he talked?'

'Not yet, Major,' said Vinh. 'We haven't started questioning him. We were waiting for you. In any case, I thought it might be useful for him to get a little thirsty.'

In the outside office they could hear the tramp of feet on the uncarpeted floors as the villa lost its uninhabited day-time air, with new arrivals in cars which drew up and moved off quickly. The villa awoke like a night club. The reception-room, the map-room, the radio-room and the interrogation-rooms

quicken into a kind of gaiety. If the day belonged to the OAS, the night restored the Villa Rouchard to its authority.

Du Pré began to dictate his report to Vinh, who typed it directly onto the machine.

'General situation. The arbitrary murders by the OAS continue. Today's losses consist of twenty-seven killed (twenty-two Moslems, three Europeans, two unidentified) and forty-five wounded (thirty-nine Moslems and six Europeans). The object appears to be to provoke the Moslems into a mass descent from the Casbah which will embroil the Army units who hitherto have maintained an attitude of neutrality unless attacked.'

Vinh looked up quizzically at du Pré and said,

'Neutrality. General Ailleret won't like that very much, Major.'

'No,' said du Pré with a shrug, and he stretched his arms behind his head. 'No—he won't like it, but it's the truth and it's time someone said it. The Army has been neutral in the fight against the OAS except when attacked.'

He waved the day's casualty list at Vinh, and said,

'Do you think they'd have such a good score if the Army stood by de Gaulle?'

'You can only push an army so far,' said Vinh. 'After all, some of the lads have just come in from the *bled* where they've been chasing the *fellagha*. What d'you think is their conditioned reflex when some bastard starts waving the FLN flag and the OAS man shoots him for his trouble? They want to cheer.'

Du Pré shook his head.

'It isn't like that, Vinh. You know it. They're shooting them like rats, and they're doing it because they think they're rats, not people.'

'That's the African Army,' said Vinh.

'The African Army's dead,' said du Pré. 'Salan killed it. Where are we?'

‘... maintained an attitude of neutrality unless attacked,’ Vinh read aloud.

‘The attitude of the conscripts,’ du Pré continued, ‘remains exemplary. They have so far shown no disposition to do otherwise than carry out orders in the service of France. Attempts by the OAS to create bonds of sympathy by fraternizing with the conscripts have made little progress. The Republican Guards continue to discharge their duties with impartiality. The funeral of Gordien and Bastianini, assassinated in the Place du Gouvernement, was the occasion for an impressive display of discipline.’

He paused, and said,

‘What else, Vinh?’

‘What about telling them who’s going to win the three o’clock in the trotting?’

Ignoring his flippancy, du Pré bent over his shoulder to read the last words he had dictated.

‘The mood of the Europeans,’ he went on, ‘is reserved. Wholeheartedly sympathetic with the aims of the OAS, it is in many important instances out of sympathy with OAS methods. These are, however, intimidating enough to discourage any mass movement in favour of some compromise arrangement.

‘Nevertheless, the manifesto of the Partisans of the Programme for the Policies of the President published this morning in the *Dépêche Algérienne* shows that there is an embryonic public opinion in favour of the Evian discussions which, if it survives, may lead to wider support.’

‘If it survives,’ Vinh echoed.

‘The acting chairman is Dr. David Hassid, a highly respected and senior member of the Faculty of Medicine at Algiers University.’

Du Pré paused at the end of the sentence. He had pronounced the name with a proprietary affection in which the memory of Eliane and the afternoon were still involved.

'Do you know de Croissillon, his son-in-law?' Vinh asked without raising his eyes from his machine.

'Yes,' du Pré answered curtly.

'He's the big-wheel OAS fund-raiser,' said Vinh.

'How do you know?' du Pré asked, walking across the room and switching on the electric fan. Towards evening, the inhabitants of Maison Carrée had begun to burn the refuse which had accumulated in the streets since the garbage-collectors' strike, and an evil-smelling smoke drifted over the houses on the upper terraces of the city. Its stench suffocated the fragrance of the mimosa in the gardens, and its grey particles seeped through the closed shutters.

'How do you know?' du Pré repeated.

'Dulac's been doing a report on OAS finances. De Croissillon is their Number One fund-raiser. He'll be able to give Hassid a few tips on how to raise cash for the PPPP . . . I think we ought to grab de Croissillon.'

'There's enough on our plate at the moment,' du Pré said, dismissing the idea. He finished dictating the political report at ten to twelve and then without an interval said,

'Let's have Armidal in. I want to talk to him.'

'Armidal!' Vinh called out into the orderly room, and after a few minutes the prisoner was brought up by two guards in plain clothes from the basement known at the Villa Rouchard as 'the kitchen'. Armidal was still wearing the open-necked blue silk shirt, light-grey trousers and suede shoes in which he had been seized at the Hi-Fi Club. As he was being bundled into the car he had tried to resist, and a darkening bruise on the side of his forehead showed where his face had been held down on the floor. Otherwise—and apart from the handcuffs on his wrists—his fair crew-cut head and still closely-shaven face gave him the appearance of a student who had groomed himself for an early-evening drink at a seaside bar.

He confronted du Pré without surprise.

'It's you—you swine. I could have guessed it.'

'Sit down, Armidal,' said du Pré, picking up the dossier which Vinh handed to him.

'Don't be so damned familiar,' said Armidal. He grinned insolently, and said, 'I can tell you, as a law student, that you're obliged under the Code to address me as Mr. Armidal.' Then he scowled, and added, 'You lousy *barbouze*!'

One of the guards hustled him into a chair, and du Pré, studying the prisoner, said quietly,

'We'll come to that in a few minutes. Let's see. Your name is Jean-Pierre Armidal—Rue Duc des Cars—age twenty-four—military service—Constantine, Aures—father small *colon*—Mitidja—law student—yes.' He turned over the pages while Armidal looked on indifferently. 'What else do we know about him, Vinh?'

'There isn't much else,' said Vinh. 'He's a pal of Vedoni—hangs about a lot in bars—no criminal record—but he likes the girls.'

'Well,' said du Pré, 'no one should get shot for that.'

Vinh and the guards laughed, but Armidal said with a malicious tic at the side of his mouth,

'The only difference between us, dear boy, is that you've got to buy it, and I get it free.'

'That's a very interesting thought,' said du Pré, unruffled. 'I think we'll have a few words alone with M. Armidal.'

He nodded to the guards, and Armidal followed their departure with a cautious look.

'You are a great success with women, Armidal?' du Pré asked. He didn't reply.

'Let me put it differently. Are women a great success with you?'

Armidal's eyes reddened, and he said fiercely,

'They do better with me than with you. Let's leave it like that.'

'Véronique?'

'Véronique told me that a dirty *barbouze* who paid but didn't

perform was asking questions—and that she made up a few answers.'

Du Pré chuckled.

'That's very ingenious—very . . . Tell me, Armidal, what would you like most at this moment apart from wanting to kick us in the teeth?'

'A glass of water.'

'A glass of water,' du Pré repeated. 'It's extraordinary how simple our needs are when you come to break them down. A glass of water! Well, you'll have one . . . But not yet. When you've answered a few questions, you'll have your glass of water.'

Involuntarily, Armidal passed his tongue over his dry lips. Despite the electric fan, the room was hot, and the three men were sweating on their brows and in the hollows of their necks.

'He likes girls,' Vinh said, staring at Armidal like a man possessed of a fixed idea. With his own pock-marked face, he resented the smooth, well-nourished, sunburnt skin of the prisoner.

'Were you in Indo-China?' du Pré asked.

'No,' said Armidal negligently. 'I was too young.'

'But you have friends who fought in the Delta?'

Armidal looked at the map of Algiers with the miniature red flags for Europeans murdered and green flags for Moslems, and said warily,

'Yes—I have friends who fought in the Delta. They're the best.'

'They are indeed,' said du Pré. 'Vinh, for example.'

'I'm not talking about the rabble that carried the Army's bags.'

Du Pré put his hand cautioningly on Vinh's arm and said, 'I understand that. You're talking about the Delta Commandos?'

Armidal ignored the question, and said,

'What about that water?'

'Not yet,' said du Pré. 'Do you remember Mlle Lacaze?'

Armidal didn't answer.

'I'll remind you,' said du Pré. 'She was one of the Health Visitors—one of the social workers at El Biar. She dragged herself away after the shooting, and lay for fifteen hours dying without care—without water—with two bullets in her lungs.'

'They would have killed us,' said Armidal. 'They were Communists helping the FLN.'

'I see,' said du Pré calmly. 'You mean that these twelve people—schoolteachers, health workers, relief assistants—eight men and four women who were doing social work were murdered——'

'—executed——'

'—for being Communists . . . They were, in fact, Socialists, Liberals and Catholics. But they were objectively—as the Communists say—helping the FLN?'

'That's it,' said Armidal with an expression of relief that du Pré had formulated his reasons.

'So you lined them up and shot them down behind the villa?'

'I had nothing to do with it,' said Armidal. 'I only heard about it later.' He tried to wipe his forehead with the side of his arm. 'But it was right. They were helping the enemy.'

'Who gave you the orders?' du Pré asked.

'You go to hell,' said Armidal.

'Get me a glass of water, Vinh,' said du Pré.

Armidal hunched his shoulders and looked away as du Pré drank the whole glass in a single swallow.

'Now then,' he said, 'who gave you that order?'

'No one gives me orders,' said Armidal.

'But Véronique——' du Pré began.

'Véronique's a lying whore. Didn't you know, old boy? All whores are liars. Why don't you grow up?'

'Who gave you the order?' du Pré repeated. He rose, and walked from behind the trestle-table to where Armidal was sitting.

'Listen,' he said. 'We've got till five o'clock before we send you out to Maison Blanche and put you in the plane for Paris.'

Before then, you're going to tell us what you know—first of all, about El Biar, and second—well, all the rest of it.'

'I'll tell you nothing,' said Armidal, crossing his legs. 'Not a thing.'

Vinh walked from behind the trestle-table to where Armidal was sitting, and for a few moments they looked at each other with hatred. The elegance of the student offended Vinh, and he was conscious that Armidal regarded him, a former Army auxiliary, with contempt.

'He likes girls, Major,' Vinh said thoughtfully. 'He needs doctoring with a rusty razor.'

Gratified, he watched the pallor of Armidal's face change into a corpse-like hue and the sweat form in laces on his forehead. Armidal again tried to wipe his brow with his manacled hands and said,

'I don't know what you intend. I can only tell you, dear boy, that General de Gaulle in 1958 through André Malraux, the Minister of Culture and your present boss—you lying bastard—said that torture must stop.'

Du Pré said quietly.

'No one's going to torture you. I only want you to answer a few questions. And I'll ask you them alone.'

Vinh stood to attention and left. Then du Pré went to his table, poured a glass of water from the carafe, and handed it to Armidal.

'Why did you join the OAS?' he asked.

Armidal finished his drink, and du Pré took the glass from his hands.

'Why? . . . I'll tell you. Till a few years ago, I had some sympathy with the Arabs. They were doing what everyone else was doing all over the world. They wanted their independence. They were nationalists. One of my ancestors fought with the Greeks in their War of Independence. Another was in Lafayette's army. So why shouldn't the Arabs fight for their independence? That's how I felt.'

He halted, and du Pré said,
'That's interesting. Go on.'

'Well, one day——' Armidal smiled reflectively, and said in parenthesis, 'I was very young when I look back on it—one day a few years ago, I went with a few friends and my cousins for a picnic to the Gorges of Chiffra. It was in late spring—just as it is now. Well, on the way—we were travelling in a Citroën and a Mercedes—we came across a car that had gone off the road into a ditch near some eucalyptus-trees. There were some Arabs squatting near by eating oranges in the road, and they looked as if they were waiting for a breakdown car—something like that.'

A faint colour had come into Armidal's face as he spoke, and the defiance in his voice had been replaced by the urgency with which he wanted to tell his story. Du Pré sat immobile with his hands clasped in front of him on the table.

'Jean-Paul—he was my cousin who was driving—slowed down.'

'To help them?' du Pré asked.

'No—just to get past.'

'And then?'

'Then, all of a sudden, from the ditch, some of the Arabs let fly with sub-machine-guns. They killed Jean-Paul, Lucie and their sixteen-year-old daughter on the spot. The Mercedes ran into a ditch. And we got away.'

'Was there anyone else in the Mercedes?'

'Marie-Caguste—Lucie's best friend—and her husband. The Arabs dropped a match in the petrol tank. We watched them burn from the hills. We were unarmed.'

He thumped his handcuffs on his knee and repeated,

'We watched them burn.'

His eyes prickled with tears, and he averted his face.

'You came back to Algiers and joined the OAS.'

'Yes,' said Armidal, raising his head. 'I joined the OAS because I have a mother and father and sisters and brothers in

the Mitidja. And if anyone's going to burn, it'll be first the Moslems and then myself.'

Du Pré was silent for a few moments. Then he said, 'Let me put another point to you. You're a law student.' Armidal smiled ruefully.

'I'm registered as a law student, but I keep getting interrupted.'

'You want to practise law.'

'One day, perhaps—yes, if I live, I'll practise law.'

'And yet you've taken up arms—illegally—against the Government.'

'Oh, for God's sake,' said Armidal, stretching his legs, 'you Gaullists make me sick with your sanctimonious humbug. You know damned well that there's one right which transcends everything else. And that's the right of rebellion in favour of a moral law. Isn't that what de Gaulle did in 1940? The constitutional lawyers can argue till the cows come home about the legal niceties. De Gaulle rebelled because Vichy demanded a submission which was offensive to his moral concepts. What about you—weren't you one of the early resisters?'

'I was.'

'Did you sit down and look up the textbooks or did you act?'

'I wasn't more than a boy. I hadn't been long at military school. But I came to England in a fishing smack and enlisted there.'

'Very well,' said Armidal triumphantly. 'So you joined a rebel General, condemned to death by a properly constituted court. This is the moment when, if I were a real lawyer, I'd jab my finger at you.'

Du Pré smiled faintly.

'What is the difference between your defection—you in the Resistance and ours in the OAS?'

'At a certain point,' said du Pré, 'there's no difference in principle. We've all resisted the authority of a State. But, I'll tell you, Armidal—there's a vast difference in fact.'

His voice became metallic.

'We fought with arms against soldiers. You massacre unarmed civilians. The tortures of the Rue Lauriston were the Gestapo's tortures—not ours. The tragedy of France is that we learnt from the brutes. The Gestapo taught us to torture. That's the sin of all of us. When this Algerian war is over, there'll be a lot to unlearn—not only for Frenchmen but for the whole world. France has become infected with the ravisher's disease, and we've got to try and bring it back to wholesomeness and health. That's our responsibility—no one else's.'

Du Pré got up and walked across the room where he switched off the fan, and threw the shutters wide open.

'Look at that city,' he said to Armidal. 'It's asleep with terrible dreams. And not just because it's afraid. It's a city that's been stricken by the plague of our generation—the passion to give pain.'

The smell of burning ordure had been blown away by the night breezes, and the room had become ventilated with the cool air.

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'How many more Moslem flower-sellers and shopkeepers and children do you have to kill before you're satisfied? I'll tell you this, Armidal. French Algeria is dead. It's dead. You can mourn it. You can't revive it by blood-letting. It's dead, and a hundred thousand dead Moslems won't revive it. This is the evolution we've always been talking about. It's come faster than we thought. The Arabs have evolved into people . . . Now tell me who gave you the orders for the El Biar executions?'

The two men faced each other, and neither spoke. In the orderly room someone had made a successful joke, and a concerted guffaw shattered the silence, leaving them both with a sense of exclusion.

'Who was it?' du Pré asked again.

'I've got nothing to say,' said Armidal, 'except that it's better to kill twelve and save Algeria than to let them live and destroy it.'

'Yes,' said du Pré, reflectively, playing with a paper-knife. 'It's the enduring question. How many must we save in order to justify our killing? Is torture less civilized than tearing the guts out of a man with a sub-machine-gun? Is it un-Christian to twist a man's arm out of its socket so as to find out where he's put the plastic under an infants' school? It's the enduring question. You're a lawyer, Armidal. Tell me what you think.'

'It's a question for philosophers, not lawyers,' said Armidal. 'The answer is—yes, alas.'

'It may be,' said du Pré. 'In war, we make rules by agreement. We consent to blast each other—but not to poison each other. We accept the atom bomb but not the electric cathodes.'

'I'm a pragmatist,' said Armidal. 'If violence works, then it's right. There aren't degrees of virtue in violence. Once you accept it as a means of regulating our affairs, you've got to accept the lot.'

Du Pré, absorbed in the discussion, nodded.

'That's true,' he said. 'But there remains one distinction. The man who initiates violence—~~f~~isn't he more guilty than the man who retaliates?'

'The FLN?'

'I accept that,' said du Pré. 'The FLN attacked; the Army retaliated. But that doesn't let you out. The FLN have stopped fighting. It's the OAS who are killing.'

'The war's still on,' said Armidal. 'All that's happened is that de Gaulle's sold out.'

'Well, you'll be able to tell that to the Tribunal in Paris,' said du Pré. His voice became impatient. 'Who gave you the orders? Ex-General Palice?'

Armidal reacted sharply as if to challenge du Pré's derogation of Palice's rank. Instead, he smiled to himself, and shut his eyes.

'We've got a lot of time,' said du Pré.

'You'll get nothing out of me,' said Armidal. 'Listen!' He leaned forward over his handcuffed hands. 'Perhaps you can't

understand. I'm here because I'm a volunteer. You're here because you're a paid *barbouze*.'

Du Pré got up from his desk and Armidal flinched. But du Pré's hand quivered, and he lowered it.

'No,' he said. 'I don't think so . . . I don't think so.' He regained his composure, and said, 'You're wrong, Armidal. We're volunteers. We were reservists and technically recalled. But we're volunteers.'

Armidal shook off the distinction with a shrug.

'Well, you can answer for yourself. All I can tell you is that when you volunteer for this sort of thing, you're ready to kill and be killed—and anything else you can think of . . . If the idea is right, it's bound to win. You can kill everyone of us in the OAS. But if the idea's right, it will win.'

'That's why you're going to lose, Armidal. And they're making a fool of you. What do you think is happening to the money they've been collecting in the hold-ups? . . . They're sending it to Switzerland for sake-keeping.'

'For the OAS.'

'No—for themselves.'

'It's a lie.'

'It's the truth. We know it. The money's been put in private accounts for the colonels and the deserters and the German legionaries. While you're risking your lives and doing the dirty work, they're looking after themselves . . . Ask de Croissillon.'

'De Croissillon has nothing—'

Armidal stopped and said, 'I'd like some more water.'

Du Pré poured another glass of water from the carafe, and handed it to him.

'So you know de Croissillon.'

Armidal hesitated, and said,

'Yes—I know him.'

'How well do you know him?'

'He was a friend of my father. What about it?'

'How much did he pay the execution squad?'

Armidal said, 'Go to hell,' and flung the glass from his clasped hands against the floor, where it broke into small pieces.

Vinh came through the door, and looked inquiringly at du Pré who stood and kicked the fragments of glass from under his feet.

'Between now and five o'clock,' said du Pré, 'I want you to find out from M. Armidal first of all who ordered the El Biar job, secondly how much the killers were paid—they're paid very well, you know, and I think they ought to know in France what the rate for the job is. Thirdly, I want to know if Ehrlich—the legionary—was part of the squad. Fourthly, I want to know what's the connection between Captain Peyron and the Delta Commandos. And fifthly, I want to know something about their future programme.'

'I'd better take this down,' said Vinh, fumbling for a pencil.

'There's nothing else,' said du Pré. 'Armidal is small fry. They wouldn't tell him much.'

'Only enough,' said Armidal, 'for me to tell you that the whole lot of you will soon be blown to hell.'

'I'll deal with it,' said Vinh.

Du Pré gathered up his papers, and said,

'I'm going back to my hotel.'

He stood for a moment at the door, and said,

'Oh, yes—you might find out from him whether de Croissillon's still the official paymaster of the OAS.'

'Yes, sir,' said Vinh.

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Armidal sat unstirring in his chair while Vinh went to the window and closed the shutters. The sweat which had chilled on his body began to dribble again through its hollows and between its muscles. Vinh approached the prisoner and said in an impassive voice,

'I hear you like girls.'

CHAPTER XII

BETWEEN two rubbers of bridge, Madame Rollin was offering her views on the situation to her deferential court of Thursday afternoon visitors. She accompanied her monologue with an intermittent snapping of the cards which she had carefully cut and now held, poised for splicing, in her arthritic and beringed hands. In her own home her voice, always authoritative, developed a special timbre, a contralto with the undertones sometimes to be heard in deep-bosomed lieder singers.

'Now that there's a cease-fire,' she said, 'it's possible that we'll all be murdered in our beds. But that's always been a possibility in Algeria. When my husband was alive, I used to go about in Blida with a revolver on my hip.' She put the cards down and wagged her finger at Peyron. 'And don't look at me like that. I wasn't as large as I am now.' She passed one hand over her beige lace draperies. 'I was a slim young woman thirty-five years ago, and I could wear a revolver with the best of them. We used to ride a lot, and I wore breeches—it was considered rather advanced in those days—I must have looked like a cow-girl.'

'The prettiest cow-girl on the plain,' said M. Gilbert, a white-haired retired army officer who had been one of Madame Rollin's lovers many years before and who now sat every afternoon in an armchair, most of the time in a self-absorbed silence.

'They all knew me—all got used to me,' said Madame Rollin, scooping up the cards again in her pale, brown-flecked hands. 'You know, Peyron—when the British army had a headquarters staff billeted on my farm in the Mitidja, I never had a minute's trouble. I sent for the Colonel on the very first day and said to him, "You will be responsible for any damage

done on my property.” He was very gentlemanly once he saw who he was dealing with. If there’s anything I’ve learnt in life, it’s the need to be firm—to demand what you’re entitled to.’

‘You are quite right,’ said Madame Boissière, the elderly widow of a Government official. ‘It’s so hard to know what one’s entitled to nowadays.’

‘When you don’t know what you’re entitled to,’ said Madame Rollin, ‘the only thing to do is sit tight—don’t move. How would you like to make some money, Peyron?’

‘I’d love to make some money, Madame,’ he replied. ‘But the only way for soldiers to make money is dishonestly.’

‘Oh, don’t be silly,’ said Madame Rollin. She rang the silver bell on the occasional table, and ordered coffee from the *fatma* who appeared. ‘Everyone’s trying to make the best of a bad job. Just ask yourself—what’s happened since the cease-fire—after all, it’s only a day old. The OAS are fighting to clear the European city. The Moslems—including my own girl here—she obviously won’t last though she’s been with me for six years—they’re going to hole up in the Casbah. The exodus has already begun.’

‘You should have seen the traffic to Maison Blanche,’ Madame Boissière began.

Madame Rollin interrupted her impatiently.

‘That’s only a beginning. There’s bound to be an increase in the number going back to France. Who would have thought that Frenchmen would ever be refugees!’

‘How will that help me to make a fortune?’ Peyron asked.

‘Well,’ said Madame Rollin, and her eyes brightened with excitement, ‘all this means that we are in a buyer’s market. People of all kinds—Moslems and Europeans—all of them will want to sell. They’ll want to sell as fast as they can. That’s where we come in. We will form a company to keep French property in French hands.’

‘She is brilliant,’ said M. Gilbert to himself in his armchair. ‘Quite brilliant.’

'I've already made one or two purchases in a modest way,' said Madame Rollin, 'and my lawyer is about to set up a small company.'

'You'll have to be careful,' said Peyron, taking a cup of coffee from the maid, who handed it to him with her face averted.

'What of?' Madame Rollin asked briskly.

'It's an excellent idea that's occurred to one or two people. But there are snags. I——'

He paused to allow the moaning of an ambulance to reach its peak and die away.

'I don't think either the OAS or the FLN is very keen on property deals—not at this stage. What if there's retrospective legislation?'

'Oh, nonsense,' said Madame Rollin, shuffling the cards aggressively. 'Retrospective legislation is immoral. I can't imagine any Government doing that.'

'The important thing,' said M. Gilbert, 'is to guarantee pension rights.'

'What's that got to do with it?' Madame Rollin asked.

'Nothing,' said Gilbert, wiping a trace of coffee from his white moustache. 'I was merely following a line of thought.'

'Does anyone know if the Evian Agreement provides for the transfer of pension rights to people who live in Algeria?' a pretty young woman asked from the next table.

There was a general burst of laughter.

'It's not the agreement that matters,' said Dr. Lecret. 'What counts is our ability to make it void.'

There was a murmur of assent.

'Algeria,' he went on, 'has never been governed from Paris. Every time we've said "no" here, it's been "no". We've got a lot of support and understanding even among the Parliamentarians. There won't be a court in France that'll convict any of our young men.'

'You tell us, Peyron,' said Madame Rollin. 'Be indiscreet. What does the Army really think of the OAS?'

She asked the question in a light tone, and there were cries from the others of 'Come on—tell us.'

Peyron pulled at the bottom of his tunic, while Madame Rollin, awaiting his reply, began to powder her face. Among the guests there was a slight uneasiness as they watched Peyron frown in his attempt to formulate his ideas.

'Yes,' he said, 'I'll tell you. But not what the Army thinks.'

'How disappointing!' said the pretty young woman.

'I'll tell you what I think . . . As a soldier, I naturally carry out orders. That is all. But if I were a civilian, I hope and believe I'd be in the OAS.'

'Bravo!' said M. Gilbert.

'Very good!' said Madame Rollin. 'Let's drink to that.' She shook the bell delightedly, spreading her dress over the chair so that she looked like a duenna at a ball, and said,

'In life you've got to take sides. You've got to take sides. It's no good sitting on the fence . . . What do you think of our Dr. Hassid forming that revolting group, the PPPP? I was horrified.'

'Horried!' echoed M. Gilbert. 'But not surprised,' he added. 'No, not surprised.'

'I always felt,' he said, 'that he was too mixed up with the others.'

'You can't trust them,' said Madame Boissière. 'Though it was a pity about Si Cada.'

'In the end, I was very doubtful about him,' said Madame Rollin.

'He was the chief medical officer of the FLN in Algiers,' said Peyron. 'Very close to Hassid.'

'There—you see,' said the pretty young woman, 'you can't trust any of them.'

'The one I'm sorry for,' said Dr. Lecret, 'is de Croissillon. He must resent every minute of his connection with Hassid. I always feel that the Crémieux Decree was a mistake, and that France is still paying for it.'

'I wouldn't go quite as far as that,' said Peyron. 'The mistake was to have naturalization *en masse*. It was a good idea to give the native Jews French citizenship. But I would have been more selective.'

'His name was Isaac,' said Gilbert in a quavering monotone. 'Isaac Crémieux—but he called himself Adolphe.'

'1870's a long time ago,' said Peyron.

'But they're still with us,' said Madame Lecret, who had been silent till then.

'De Gaulle isn't a Jew—is he?' said the pretty young woman, examining herself in the looking-glass behind her partner's head.

'He isn't a Jew,' said Lecret, 'but he's always been pretty thick with them. Look at Debré—Pompidou.'

'I read somewhere,' said Madame Boissière, 'I think it was in *Rivarol*—that Madame de Gaulle's a Jew.'

'That's Madame Mendès-France,' said Peyron.

'It's all the same,' said Madame Rollin. 'They're everywhere.'

She took a cigarette, and fixed it in an ivory holder. Peyron quickly lit it for her with his cigarette lighter.

'I'm not so sorry for de Croissillon,' she said, letting the smoke trickle from her mouth. 'He can look after himself. I'm sorry for Eliane—she must be very torn by all that's going on. And she's such a lovely girl!'

'Do you really think so?' Madame Lecret asked. Her eyes were beady with spite as she said,

'I saw her not long ago at the Opera—yes, you were with them, Alice.'

Madame Rollin half-closed her eyes at the familiar form of address, and didn't answer, but Madame Lecret continued undisturbed.

'I didn't think she looked as pretty as she used to. It's strange how their women age quickly—especially the dark ones. I thought her over-made-up—and that green frock made her look even heavier.'

Madame Rollin scrutinized Madame Lecret's mauve dress with the straggling neckline pinned together with an imitation diamond brooch, and said,

'I've always thought Eliane very pretty. When I saw her walking in the street yesterday—just by chance from a car—she looked beautiful. She's a very elegant woman with very good taste—and that's my opinion, whatever I may think of the PPPP.'

'They've moved into the Aletti,' said Peyron. 'I'm going to see de Croissillon later on.'

'Give Eliane my love,' said Madame Rollin, 'and tell her to come and see me when the troubles are over.'

Peyron smiled, and said,

'I don't think she'll regard that as a very pressing invitation.'

Madame Rollin tapped on the floor with her stick. A delay by the *fatma* always exasperated her.

'Where is that wretched girl?' she said, shaking her bell in fury. 'Help me up, Gilbert.'

Her aged beau heaved himself from his chair, and went over to assist her.

'Don't pull at me,' she said petulantly. 'Just give me your arm.'

'Fatima!' she called out at the door. 'Fatima!' Her voice, multiplied by many decibels, had lost its urbane throatiness and had become a tuneless cry like a night bird's.

'Never there! Never there!' she complained, and walked through the rest of the flat, leaning on her stick and calling the servant's name.

When she returned, her male guests rose, waiting for her to resume her seat.

'She's gone,' she said.

'She'll be back,' said Madame Boissière.

'Oh, no,' said Madame Rollin, 'she never goes out in the day unless I send her . . . She's gone. Gone! She won't come back.'

'She must have heard Captain Peyron's views of the OAS,' said Dr. Lecret with a short laugh.

'Well, if she did,' said Madame Rollin, 'I hope it'll teach her a lesson. Come on. We can do without them. I'm going to pour out the drinks myself.'

*

At five o'clock, three three-inch mortar shells fell on the Moslem crowds in the Place du Gouvernement, a hundred yards from the entrance to the Casbah.

At the foot of the monument to the Duke of Orleans, a story-teller was surrounded by about fifty Arabs, who were listening enraptured to the last words of his tale.

'... and Kamar-al-Ahmar and his wife Shams-al-Nahar lived to enjoy all satisfaction and comfort of life, till there came to them the Destroyer of Delights and Dissolver of Societies, the Pillager of Palaces, the Provider for Cemeteries and the Filler of Graves. And now glory be to the Living One who does not die and in whose hand is the dominion of the visible and invisible worlds.'

Near the wall, six taxis waited on a rank. Their drivers were discussing one of the leaflets which had been dropped from a helicopter. It showed a Moslem and a European striding towards a happy future where a house, a motor-car and a tractor awaited them as a result of the cease-fire.

The blind beggars by the mosque had begun their laments. A public scribe was composing a letter from a docker to his brother in Batna, saying that he would return for the wedding after the feast of Achour. Three *yaouleds* were running hopefully with their shoe-boxes towards the Rue du Divan where a group of Moslems in European clothes had appeared. A seller of almond 'gazelle-horns' was calling his wares on the way home to the Casbah. And Fatima was standing at a food-stall with a bread-basket, her eyes fixed above her *haïk* on the terraced whiteness of the citadel where she could at last be secure.

At the entrance to the Casbah the Zouaves stood at ease.

When the first shell burst near the monument, there followed a long second of total silence. Then, a wave of men and women, some bleeding and covered with the dust where they had fallen, moved screaming in the direction of the Rue du Divan from which a new flood of panic-stricken Moslems poured to meet them. The second shell fell among the taxis, setting four on fire. As in a film scene regulated by a director on a crane, the crowd rushed from the blaze in a terror that was like a discipline. The third mortar shell killed the storyteller, a *yaouled* and Fatima.

Within a few minutes, the square was empty except for the dead, the injured and the litter left by the explosions. Then Moslem volunteers began to cordon off the area, restraining their compatriots who shrieked abuse and defiance at the OAS. From the Casbah, a group of Moslem nurses and doctors came hurrying with stretchers. They met the ambulances from the Mustapha and there was a brief colloquy before they allocated their duties. The wounded Moslems who were conscious were taken into the field-hospitals in the Casbah; the dead and dying were taken to the Mustapha. As the first ambulances drove away, the women at the gates began their *you-you*, a high-pitched warbling incitement that mingled in a harmony of hatred and despair with the ululation of the sirens.

Peyron, who had diverged from his route to the Aletti when he heard the shellfire, looked at the edge of his trousers with distaste. They were rimmed with blood where he had crossed on foot between two wrecked taxis. Absurdly, a single shoe lay in the middle of the square, and he wondered where the other shoe could be, what a man did with one shoe, and whether he could return and recover the one he had lost. Not far from the shoe was a bread-basket. The loaves were bloodstained, and Peyron turned his face away.

*

The news of the shelling reached the Cintra Bar at the

Aletti within a few seconds of the last mortar-burst. Georges Burin, the OAS liaison officer with the journalists at the hotel, was drinking a campari in small sips. As the owner of Aux Trois Vents, a bar in the Rue d'Isly, he was accustomed to making the drinks which his customers offered him last a long time. On this occasion he was paying for the drinks himself, and the journalists grouped around him were listening with the air of men who hope by attentiveness to flatter their host into indiscretion.

'It's the beginning of the riposte,' said Burin, straightening his dark-blue tie and giving himself a quick glance of approval in the looking-glass beyond the many-coloured bottles on the other side of the bar. 'Why should they think we're going to take it lying down?'

'Would you say,' asked Fowler, 'that this is official OAS policy laid down by Salan?'

'Our chief naturally takes responsibility for everything the Secret Army does. How we strike—where we strike—that's our affair. I hope you're going to make that clear when you send your dispatches. There's been too many lies about the OAS—especially by the Italians.'

'Why've you picked on them?' Schiller asked boldly.

Burin looked him up and down, and said,

'Because they're paid—they're paid twice—once by the FLN and once by the Italian oil companies. They want to divert our oil by pipe-line to Tripoli. I hope you Americans aren't doing the same thing.'

Fowler interposed quickly.

'No—Schiller isn't paid by the Italians. He's paid by his wife to stay out here.'

Burin smiled a cautious smile. He liked the British journalists who often used to drink at the Trois Vents before the FLN machine-gunned it. He reserved his mistrust for the American correspondents, who had tried a few times to start arguments in his bar about colonialism.

‘Seriously, Georges,’ Fowler went on, ‘what’s the point of shelling the Place du Gouvernement? You only knock off a few chauffeurs and donkey-drivers.’

‘It’s important,’ said Burin, ‘because it shows the Moslems we’ve got the means to enforce our will—and that there aren’t going to be any half-measures.’

‘I’m not so sure,’ said Peyron in his languid voice as he joined them. ‘I’ve been puzzled all the way from the Square. Right in the middle of the damned place was one shoe. Now, if that isn’t a half-measure, what is?’

Burin laughed.

‘We’ll send for the other one tomorrow.’

‘How was it, sir?’ asked Fowler.

‘How was it?’ Peyron repeated, taking the whisky which Burin had ordered for him. ‘It was like a knacker’s yard.’

He swallowed his drink fast, and went on,

‘A knacker’s yard with human animals—a letter, shreds of clothes, broken glass—various unpleasant things lying about. That’s what it was like. Why don’t you go down there?’

‘We’ve got a couple of men on the job,’ said Schiller. ‘We’ve just got back from Sidi.’

‘It’s only the beginning,’ said Burin ‘All this is small stuff.’

At the end of the bar a group of officers, civilians and three girls in flowered dresses were engaged in noisy banter.

‘Excuse me,’ said Peyron. ‘I must have a word with my friend de Croissillon.’

A young man excitedly raised his glass and called out,
‘Long live the OAS!’

A number of drinkers, including Burin, raised their glasses to him and each other, and called out, ‘OAS!’ The journalists waited for the glasses of the others to be lowered before drinking themselves.

‘You’re not drinking,’ Burin said, finishing his campari in a single swig.

'We don't drink toasts,' said Schiller. 'We're neutral.'

'Well, we'll see about that,' said Burin.

He took another drink, and raised his glass to the other group.

'French Algeria!' he called out.

'French Algeria!' the others echoed, this time in a clamour in which several officers joined. The toasts multiplied. The bar became crowded with people who had been up to the Place du Gouvernement. They were in agreement. The shelling had done its job. It had driven the Moslems back into the Casbah. It had shown them that the OAS had power, and that was all they respected. It had also blown a few FLN-ers into small pieces. The chatter was broken by the laughter of the girls, their voices gesticulating as if they were hands. Every now and again someone called 'Hang de Gaulle!' from the ambush of a scrum. The abuse was followed by laughter. The officers, quietly drinking, smiled complaisantly.

'This is Cease-Fire plus One,' said Burin confidentially to Fowler. 'Just wait till it's Cease-Fire plus Ten. Then you'll have something to write home about.'

Peyron pushed his way towards de Croissillon, who was holding Eliane's arm as she made for the door.

'I'll see you later,' said de Croissillon. 'My wife isn't feeling very well.'

Peyron bowed to Eliane, and noticed how her eyes had darkened and a trace of rouge had appeared against her pallor.

*

The evening in the Aletti was always heralded by the smacking sounds of shutters being opened in concert to receive the breezes from the sea. They were well-drilled, formal sounds; first, the catch, then the first panel, then the second, then the final fling so that the room could take breath. The de Croissillons' suite of rooms on the fifth floor gave immediately on to the port, and since they had left her father's flat Eliane used to

sit each evening on a balcony looking down at the tankers, the supply ships and the general cargo vessels moored in the Basin.

When they returned to their rooms from the bar Eliane went straight to the window, opened the shutters, and sat herself in her armchair. De Croissillon took off his jacket and threw it on the bed.

'Aren't you going back?' she asked.

'No,' he answered, taking a cigarette from the lacquered box on the table.

'Do go,' she said. 'I'm sorry, Walter, I took you away.'

He lit his cigarette and came over and stood behind her with his hands on her shoulders. She became tense and still, and in the silence it was as if she had ceased to breathe.

'Is anything the matter?' de Croissillon asked.

She looked straight ahead, unmoving, and said,

'No—there's nothing the matter.'

'There must be. Why did you get up so suddenly and——'

'I told you. I didn't feel well.'

She disengaged herself from his hands, and stood by the open window, staring out to sea at the funnels which were now tipped by the flush of the evening sky. He followed her and propped himself against the door, gravely inspecting her face.

'There is something the matter, Eliane,' he insisted.

'You know what's the matter,' she said. 'I—I . . .' Her voice faltered and ebbed away.

'What is it?'

She spoke as if she had made a resolution.

'I can't stand those dreadful braggarts in the bar—boasting about killing, and going on and on and on about it. Isn't it enough that they dropped their bombs or whatever it is in the Place du Gouvernement without having to call it a victory and drinking toasts to it?'

'What would you prefer?' de Croissillon asked. 'The FLN in the Rue Michelet?'

'No,' said Eliane. 'I prefer people to respect others—to respect human life—to treat killing as a defeat and not a victory. That's what I prefer.'

'Even if it means the FLN over Algiers?'

'Must it mean that?'

'Yes.'

'Then let it mean that.'

De Croissillon prepared to make an angry retort, but instead he put his hands in his pockets and said,

'Let's not wrangle, Eliane. Why don't we have a drink instead? Do you know what the date is?'

'It's March 20th.'

'Tomorrow is March 21st. Let's drink to it a day in advance.'

She took the glass of wine which he had poured from the decanter, and held it in her hands, smiling to him with a gentle tolerance.

'To tomorrow,' said de Croissillon, 'and to our anniversary!'

'To tomorrow!' Eliane repeated, and drank. De Croissillon bent over her, kissed her forehead, and sat at her feet with his head close to her arm.

'Do you remember Monsignor Antherieu—how his cheek wobbled when he said the blessing?'

'Yes,' said Eliane, putting her arm round his shoulder.

'You were afraid it was going to rain.'

'Yes,' said Eliane.

'What I keep seeing,' said de Croissillon with a chuckle, 'is Madame Rollin in that extraordinary lavender dress, sweating in the procession. God, how she sweated!'

'It's a long time ago,' said Eliane.

'And you were a poppet,' said de Croissillon. 'When I came back to the bedroom, you were kneeling on the bed—absolutely stark—and you put your arms around me and said, "I'll never want anyone in the whole wide world except you." I liked the "whole wide world". Do you remember?'

'I was very young,' said Eliane.

‘What does that mean?’

‘It means “I was very young”,’ said Eliane, rising and putting her glass on the table. ‘When one is very young, everything seems so simple—so cut-and-dried—everything seems endless and set. But then, you find that life can’t be lived like that. You’re attacked every day. Things change.’

De Croissillon rose too, and followed her to the white and gold dressing-table where she was standing.

‘And you?’ he asked.

‘I am the same person—inwardly—that I always was.’

She smiled into his frowning, inquiring face with a fresh tenderness, and he put his arms round her and said,

‘I’d be very unhappy, Eliane, if you were to change. It’s always been cut-and-dried for me . . . Whatever has happened, whatever I’ve done, I want you to know that you—’

She interrupted him by tightening his clasp, and he said,

‘Eliane, darling, I sometimes feel that I’ve been very selfish keeping you in Algiers . . . Are you sorry we didn’t take the villa at Sidi-Ferruch?’

‘No,’ said Eliane. ‘It was my suggestion. I wanted to be here in Algiers.’

‘I’m very appreciative,’ said de Croissillon. ‘Very. I know it’s a great effort for you.’

‘No,’ said Eliane. ‘It’s no longer an effort.’

‘What about the children?’ de Croissillon asked, his eyes searching her face.

‘I miss them,’ said Eliane simply. ‘I’ve missed them a lot since we’ve been here. But not so much lately.’

De Croissillon poured out another two glasses of wine, and said,

‘You know, Eliane, I’ve got an idea.’

‘I love ideas,’ said Eliane. ‘What’s this one?’

‘I think you’ll like it.’

‘All right—don’t tantalize me. Just tell me.’

‘How would you like to go back to France?’

She stood up, and began to refold a nightdress which was lying on the bed.

'To France?'

'Yes—to France. You've been saying for weeks that you want to go back. I can get you on a plane tomorrow or the next day.'

Eliane gathered up the nightdress, then laid it out again.

'How can I make arrangements so quickly?' she asked.

'All you need to do is pack,' said de Croissillon. 'I thought you'd be pleased.'

'Yes,' said Eliane. 'Yes. I'm very pleased. I don't want you to think I'm not grateful. But it's very difficult to do it so quickly.'

'I know,' said de Croissillon. 'You don't want to leave me alone at the Aletti with all those pretty girls.'

'That's it,' said Eliane, relieved at his banter.

'Perhaps,' said de Croissillon, no longer smiling, 'you don't want to leave your father. I can arrange for him to go with you.'

Eliane hesitated.

'He'd be well advised to go,' said de Croissillon, carefully watching her expression.

'He won't go,' she said. 'I'm sure he won't go.'

'Perhaps there's some other reason why you won't go,' said de Croissillon.

'What sort of reason?' Eliane asked. Her face was now composed and she faced him calmly.

'Some other friends you've made in Algiers.'

'The only friends I have here are those you know.'

De Croissillon stretched himself, and said,

'Do you want to eat?'

'No,' said Eliane.

'In that case,' said de Croissillon, 'let's have a delicious drink and go to bed.'

'No,' said Eliane, abruptly detaching herself. The day had

darkened into night, and she lit the table lamp. 'I think I'd like to read for a bit. You go down and have dinner.'

'I don't want dinner,' said de Croissillon, a half-smile lurking on his face although his pleasure had disappeared.

'You'll only be hungry later,' said Eliane. 'Do go, darling.'

The telephone buzzed with a rapid insistence. Eliane went to lift the receiver, but de Croissillon stretched his hand out first. 'De Croissillon,' he said. For a few seconds there was silence, and he irritably rattled the lever. 'They've cut off,' said the operator, and de Croissillon slammed the telephone back into position.

'Does that happen often?' he asked.

'Not that I know of,' said Eliane calmly.

'It's curious,' said de Croissillon. 'It never happens when you're not here.'

'Nor when *you're* not here,' said Eliane.

'I don't doubt it,' said de Croissillon. 'And for God's sake don't sit in that chair manicuring your nails.'

'Why not?'

'Because it irritates me.'

'But everything irritates you lately,' said Eliane, putting down her nail-file and taking up a book with the title *A Classical Anthology*.

She began to turn the pages idly.

'I'd be glad if you didn't read when I'm talking to you,' said de Croissillon, his mouth whitening.

Eliane stopped fingering the book and said, 'If it disturbs you, Walter, I'll stop. On the other hand, perhaps you'll stop talking to me, so that I can read.'

In a double sweep of his arm de Croissillon struck her face with the back of his hand and knocked the book from her grasp. Eliane flinched at the contact of his knuckles which jerked her face to the side, but she didn't move from her chair.

Without giving her a glance de Croissillon put on his jacket, adjusted his tie in front of the dressing-table, and went to the

door. He paused for a moment with his hand on the knob; then, making a decision, left the room, closing the door quietly behind him.

*

When he had gone Eliane went to the bathroom and inspected her face. A pattern of white and red marked her cheek where she had been struck, and above her cheekbone there was the beginning of a bruise. Her head still reverberated from the blow, and she could hear the tap running with a dull and muffled sound as if she herself had her head under water. She washed her face, and the weals sprang into a particular pain. She dried herself with a gentle patting motion, and returned to the open window.

The night air blew on to her hot face, and she felt peaceful as she had not felt since she had come to Algiers. The telephone call had meant that tomorrow again she could meet Robert at the Hôtel de l'Angleterre. The blow had been like a price she had to pay, and she was content to have paid it. She began to read her book again with the night midges buzzing round the reading-lamp.

'Of Alcibiades,' she read, 'it was said by those who loved him that the sun rose in his eyes.'

The sky was inky-black above the garland of lights in the bay, and Eliane read the passage again.

CHAPTER XIII

'SHE now takes me entirely for granted,' said Eliane. 'She calls me miss, and thinks I'm a secretary in the Gouvernement Général who's madly in love with a married gentleman in the Ministry of Culture.'

Du Pré moved her head on his bare shoulder, and lit a cigafette above it.

'That's between sixty and seventy per cent true,' he said.

'The most important part is true,' said Eliane. 'I'm madly in love—with a gentleman in the Ministry of Culture who does very uncultured things to me.'

She turned to him, and buried her face under his chin, and she said,

'Go on—I can feel you laughing.'

And du Pré laughed aloud, and passed his fingers along her spine.

'We mustn't laugh too loudly,' he said. 'Madame Farrière, who at this moment probably has her ear glued to the keyhole, is very respectable. She has a high opinion of me, and assumes you're here to take dictation.'

'Yes—I like that,' said Eliane.

'What did she think of your black eye?' said du Pré.

Eliane pulled his face down to hers, and kissed him, and laughed.

'She said, "Oh, the swine!"'

'Which swine?'

'The FLN swine, of course. "Oh, the swine!" she said when I came in. "They've plasticated her."'

'Let me look at it,' said du Pré.

He turned her face up to him, and tried to examine her eye in the half-light, but he couldn't see it clearly, and he jumped from the bed, and opened a single panel of the shutters.

'Why is it,' she said when he returned, 'that when I see you like that—all lithe and strong—as you are—I think you're beautiful—and when I see anybody else—anybody even on the beach—I think of the *barbouze*—and——'

Du Pré put his hand on her mouth, and said,

'Don't talk about it any more . . . What were you saying before that? . . . Let me look at your eye.'

He held her face in his two hands, and moved it to the shaft of light that was coming between the shutters. As he scrutinized it, she reached her mouth forward to kiss his, but he said,

'No, I have to study it. It's mauve—and blue—and Madeira pink—a touch of saffron—ochre—umber here and there—very pretty.'

He kissed her eye, and said,

'Does it hurt?'

'No.'

'Will you promise me not to walk into doors in future?'

'I will.'

Du Pré shook his head,

'To think that a big girl like you can't look after yourself.'

'Do you think I'm big?'

'Yes,' said du Pré. 'That's how I like you to be.'

He propped himself on his elbow and contemplated her.

'You're exactly as I like you to be . . . When's he coming back?'

'Tonight, I think. He's gone to Biskra. Why do you have to talk about him?'

'He has something to do with both of us,' said du Pré.

'How was Daddy when you saw him?'

Du Pré smiled affectionately, and then frowned at the recollection of Dr. Hassid.

'Full of beans. Neglecting his medicine for politics.'

'I don't believe you,' said Eliane. 'Nothing could make him neglect his work.'

'He's very busy with the P PPP. I've never known anyone like your father.'

'They're very brave,' said Eliane. 'He and Gibello and Boutard and Varin and Mlle Dulac. They know exactly what risks they're taking. I'm jealous of their courage.'

'It isn't enough,' said du Pré. 'Listen, Eliane—I want to try and get your father away from Algiers for a bit—for a few months.'

'I know,' said Eliane sombrely. 'I wish he'd go. It makes all our problems so much greater. But what can I do? He's so terribly stubborn I sometimes feel I could hit him.'

She clenched her fist, and banged it against the pillow.

'Would he go back to France if he thought one of your children was ill?'

Eliane looked up hopefully.

'Yes—he might. That is a good idea.'

Then a thought occurred to her, and she said,

'But he'd come back—by the next plane, when he saw it wasn't genuine.'

'No,' said du Pré. 'I think I could arrange for him not to be given transport.'

'How could you?'

'I could do it, but the first thing is to get him away.'

'I could get Madame Vezey—she's their old nurse—to send a telegram.'

'You'd have to get her to say that one of the children had a spinal injury.'

'I'd hate even to say it,' said Eliane despondently. 'In any case, I doubt if it would work. He'd want to talk to a surgeon in Paris. I'd find it very hard to lie to Daddy—'

'We'll have to think of something else,' said du Pré. 'What time is it?'

'I don't know,' Eliane said languidly. 'I don't want to know.'

Du Pré stretched over her to look at the travelling-clock at his bedside.

'It's ten to eight,' he said. 'You must go, Eliane.'

'You're always sending me away,' said Eliane.

'That,' said du Pré, 'is because I want you to come back.'

She took his hand, and laid it on the pillow, and put her face against it.

'Do you think this will ever come to an end?'

'The war?'

'Yes.'

'It will come to an end. One day there'll be Moslems and Europeans walking arm-in-arm along the Rue Michelet together.'

'And us?'

Du Pré looked down at the back of her head, and caressed her black hair with his other hand.

'I don't know about us,' he said slowly. 'How can I tell where we'll be when the fighting ends?'

'Won't you go back to Paris?'

'Probably.'

'And then—don't you want to see me there?'

'Yes—but, Eliane, there's a long way to go.'

She sat up abruptly, and began to dress. He watched her for a few minutes till he said,

'Eliane—I want you to tell me something. If I'd been the *barbouze* in the Impasse Bougeaud—hanging in the middle of the street——'

'Don't,' she said, clinging to him. 'Don't! Don't! It's horrible—I dream about it all the time.'

'Assuming I had a job,' said du Pré, persisting, 'quite apart from making reports on ancient monuments. What would you think?'

Her arms relaxed around his body, and she said, looking up at him,

'I'd understand.'

'And then?'

'I'd want to be close to you, so that whatever happened to you, good or bad, would happen to me as well.'

'And if I told you that this was so and I asked you to go back to France and wait for me there till I'd finished my work, what would you say?'

She released him and began to pull on one stocking.

'I'd say "no".'

She got up from the bed with her stocking trailing, and said, 'No—no—no,' and punctuated each 'no' with a kiss. 'I'm staying here . . . There are some things I don't want to know about you. I'm staying here.'

Du Pré put his arm around her shoulders, led her to the window, and said,

'Come and look at the most squalid view in North Africa.'

Below the window stretched a terrace of flat-roofed houses, some with washing spread out to dry, a huge pile of petrol cans, the blank walls of Moorish houses, a courtyard littered with decaying vegetables, ship-funnels at the end of the alleys, and the sea glittering beyond it all.

From behind, he kissed her hair and said,

'Well, what do you think of the view?'

And Eliane replied, 'It's the most beautiful view in the whole wide world.'

*

On her way out Eliane was hailed by Madame Farrière, who leaned over her desk and waved the *Dépêche Algérienne* at her.

'You see, miss,' she said, 'it's begun. We'll get them yet.'

Eliane smiled a greeting and tried to hurry on, but Madame Farrière detained her.

'Do you go up to Rocher Noir in the armoured train?'

'No,' Eliane replied, tightening the knot in the silk scarf which she wore over her head.

'I wouldn't go by car either,' said Madame Farrière. 'Either way, it isn't safe. If you'll take my tip, you'll keep away from Rocher Noir.'

'Why?' Eliane asked.

'There's talk—a lot of talk—that some of our boys are going to blow the whole lot of them sky-high.'

'There's no chance of my going to Rocher Noir.'

'Quite right,' said Madame Farrière sympathetically. 'I can understand what it's like at the G.G. They've got their work to do—they've got wives and kids—and can't afford to lose their pensions. But I don't know why anyone would go to Rocher Noir to work with Mostefai or whoever it is. That's what I call collaborating. I knew a woman in the war who had her hair shaved off for much less. She was only sleeping with the enemy. At Rocher Noir they're eating with them.'

Eliane smiled faintly, and tried to move on.

'Here you can't get a beefsteak,' Madame Farrière went on, detaining her. 'But there, they're living on the fat of the land. They won't be doing it for long, though.'

She shook her head, and the black ringlets tumbled over her brow.

'I'm sorry for M. du Pré,' she added. 'Such a nice man! And what a job! Recording old ruins when everyone's trying to make new ones. What a job!'

'I think he likes his work very much,' said Eliane.

'You know him long?'

'Oh, no. Not very long.'

'You're not from here.'

'I've lived in Paris for many years.'

'Yes—I could tell. The accent and the shoes. Those are very pretty shoes, miss. Did you get them at Pinet's?'

'Yes,' said Eliane, flattering her.

'I sometimes read the Paris papers,' said Madame Farrière wistfully. 'I like *France Dimanche* best. Did you read the article on Princess Margaret?'

'No,' said Eliane, wanting to end the conversation. 'My father's a republican. Good night, Madame Farrière.'

'Good night, miss,' said the concierge, folding her fat arms on the desk, and watching with envy the light movement of Eliane's slim figure as she opened the door.

Madame Farrière's elder sister, Madame Volkmann, the widow of an Alsatian sergeant who was killed in the First World War, joined her, and followed Eliane with her gaze till she was in the street.

'Does she come here often?' she asked. Since she sometimes deputized for her sister, she made it her business to know every resident and visitor to the hotel.

'She's the girl-friend of M. du Pré,' said Madame Farrière. 'She works at the G.G. She's from Paris.'

'I bet her dad wouldn't like it if he knew she came here,' said Madame Volkmann, smiling craftily.

'I bet he wouldn't,' said Madame Farrière. 'But what do you expect nowadays? There's no manners, no morals, nothing at all. She's away from home. Her dad's somewhere in France——'

'No, he isn't,' said Madame Volkmann. 'I saw him only the other day. He's Dr. Hassid from the Mustapha. He examined me in the out-patients for my back. Now there's a good man for you! It's disgusting she should be behaving like this. It's a disgrace to her father. It ought to be stopped.'

Her voice rose in indignation.

'Well, it isn't our responsibility,' said Madame Farrière. 'She seems a very nice girl.'

'Girl!' echoed Madame Volkmann. 'It's a long time since she was a girl. She married some Count or something about ten years ago.'

'My word,' said Madame Farrière with a democratic respect for titles. 'We *are* getting classy. What was his name?'

'I've forgotten,' said Madame Volkmann, 'but it'll come back. It always does. I remember seeing his picture in the paper when they got married. Tall, good-looking chap.'

'It goes to show,' said Madame Farrière, checking the thirty-seven pigeon-holes to see which of the hotel guests had not yet returned, 'you give a woman champagne, and she prefers a *rosé*.'

'With men,' said Madame Volkmann, 'you can't tell the fizz by the label. You've got to try them.'

They both thought this a good joke, and minutes later as they remembered it they both laughed to themselves.

*

In Dr. Hassid's flat, the meeting of the PPPP Executive was coming to an end.

'Is there any other business?' Dr. Hassid asked.

'That will depend on the OAS,' said Gibello. 'I had another one today.'

'They send them out like circulars,' said Boutard. 'But it's no use pretending. I don't like it very much.'

'They've scared the hell out of Varin,' said Gibello, shaking with laughter. 'He told me on the phone that he would have to give up his public duties because of his legal commitments.'

'What did you say?' asked Mlle Dulac.

Gibello puffed at his cigar before replying.

'What could I say? I said, "I hope you haven't left them too late." There was a clunk at the other end of the line, so I imagine he passed out.'

'We mustn't be hard on Varin,' said Hassid. 'He's got five children, and he's anxious.'

'I don't blame him,' said Gibello. 'But boys shouldn't play men's games.'

'He's been playing this game a long time,' said Mlle Dulac. 'Don't forget—he defended Grommelet and Fourgon and ben Cara when no one else would take the cases on. He's had his front door blown in twice. You can't blame a man for getting tired.'

'It's the same for all of us,' said Boutard.

'Not quite,' said Mlle Dulac. 'Some of us are more isolated than others. Varin always found it difficult when the whole of the Parquet was stuffed with OAS.'

'Well, it's no use worrying about Varin,' said Hassid cheerfully. 'The positive aspect of what we're doing is that we're making contact with the Moslems—Gibello's in touch with the dockers and they're starting work again tomorrow—the school-teachers have agreed to continue the baccalauréat courses—'

'And what about the doctors?' asked Mlle Dulac.

'It's a curious thing about the doctors,' said Hassid musingly. 'They're at least ninety per cent OAS. Now I wonder why that should be?'

Gibello finished his cup of coffee, and replied,

'There's nothing surprising in that. Apart from their professional skill, doctors as a whole represent the stupidest vested interest in the world. With respect, Dr. Hassid—their only concern is in keeping the layman ignorant, awestruck and credulous. They're afraid of competition. That's why they're afraid of the Moslems. They dabble on the edge of living and dying; and so they demand a respect which is really due to God. They're a narrow, arrogant, timid lot. And the Algiers crew are the worst of the bunch.'

Hassid went over to him, and patted his shoulder as he was ending his tirade.

'Come now, Gibello,' he said, 'we're not as bad as all that.'

'I didn't mean you,' said Gibello, winking to Mlle Dulac.

'Oh, I'm in it as much as anybody,' said Hassid. 'We're a trade union too. We look after our professional interests, and want to keep the club exclusive. As a union leader, you ought to understand.'

'I do,' said Gibello, 'that's why I don't let them get away with all that stuff about the Hippocratic oath. There've been some nasty stories about your Mustapha. The Moslems don't want to go there any more. They're afraid of being murdered.'

'It isn't true,' said Hassid stiffly with a spontaneous reaction of professional solidarity. 'I don't believe it.'

'You may not believe it,' said Gibello with a grim expression. 'But you might still be wrong. At any rate, I think we'd all better be going. Good night, Hassid. See you the day after tomorrow—six o'clock. What about a lift, Mademoiselle?'

Mlle Dulac was thanking him when the bell pealed, and she stopped in mid-sentence while the others faced the door, petrified like dancers in a statues competition. Francesca entered the room, hesitated, then went purposefully to the door.

'It's a bit late for visitors,' said Hassid, following her. Gibello and Boutard watched attentively while Mlle Dulac, making a quick decision, hurried after the doctor. Before Francesca could reach the door, the bell rang again, insistently as if someone were urgent to get in from the street.

'All right, all right,' Francesca called out angrily. 'I'm coming.'

'She opened the door to du Pré who stood there smiling.

'Where's the fire?' Francesca asked grumpily.

'Here,' said du Pré, pointing to his heart. 'I've been burning to see you, Francesca.'

'You're a silly,' she said, softening. 'You oughtn't to be visiting at this time of evening. You ought to be home.'

'Leave him to me, Francesca,' said Hassid. 'You just get him some food.'

'No, for heaven's sake,' said du Pré. 'You want to make me the fattest man in the Ministry.'

'You're skinny,' said Francesca, and Mlle Dulac, Boutard and Gibello joined in the laughter as they took their leave of Hassid at the porch.

'Not skinny,' said du Pré. 'Sinewy. It sounds very much better.'

'Well, come in and have a drink,' said Hassid.

'He looks as if he's had a few already,' Francesca muttered, and disappeared before Hassid could phrase his reprimand.

*

When they were alone, Hassid put his feet on his footstool, and sighed deeply.

'How are you finding the political life?' du Pré asked.

Hassid sighed again, and said,

'It's more tiring than medicine. In medicine you have to give your opinion; in politics they give you theirs. In medicine, there are half a dozen prescriptions—perhaps a dozen—for each malady; in politics a million. No, Robert, I prefer medicine.'

Du Pré smiled.

'I told you, Dr. Hassid. In politics you're just a first-year student.'

'No, I'm not,' said Hassid, his eyes dancing behind his lenses. 'I'm treating cases already. We've got the dockers to agree to return to work—and the schoolteachers are giving their baccalauréat courses till the summer.'

'But that's excellent,' said du Pré with interest. 'That really is something.'

Hassid's delight at du Pré's compliment shone in his face.

'You see,' he said, 'we're not such an old fool as you think. Have another cognac!'

Watching the doctor's lumbering back as he bent to pour out the drinks, his white hair straggling over his collar, his trousers slack in the seat, his heels sticking out of the *babouche* slippers, the elbows of his house-jacket wearing thin, du Pré felt an impulse of compassion. This was Eliane's father, and so might his own father have looked. And thinking of his father, the compassion changed into a rage that a man who had never done anyone anything but good should have died, diseased, neglected and insulted, in the ordures of a Nazi camp.

'What shall I play for you?' said Hassid.

'What's that?' du Pré asked, interrupted in his contemplation.

'Would you like the César Franck Sonata in A major?' Hassid asked. 'One of the American journalists brought me a superb recording from New York last year—Isaac Stern. I think it's the best I've ever heard.'

As he spoke, he extracted the record from the cabinet, and began to place it on the turntable of the gramophone.

'What a pity,' he said, 'that Franck died at the age of sixty-four—three years younger than me. Run over by a motor-bus at the height of his powers. What a miserable death! To produce harmonies like César Franck—God-like harmonies—and then to be crushed by some oaf in a bus. I wonder what music he had in his mind at the precise moment when the bus knocked him down. He must have had music in his mind—every musician must have music in his mind.'

'What do doctors hear?' du Pré asked, relaxed in his chair. Hassid, who was about to start the gramophone, paused and straightened his back.

'One day,' he said, 'I'm going to get stuck in this position, Robert. If it happens, just roll me curved onto the ground, and leave me there till I flatten out . . . What do I hear in my mind?'

'Yes.'

'I hear a kind of pain,' said Hassid, his face suddenly serious. He leaned with his hand on the table. 'It's audible, and comes from everywhere—from the hospitals and the streets and from my own household—I hear it at night—and I hear it by day. And it has its own accompaniment—a sad music that I could write down if I understood how to do it.'

Du Pré drank his brandy without replying.

'What feeble creatures we are, though!' said Hassid. 'We start dying as soon as we're born. We delay the process with foods and medicines and excisions until at last there is nothing left to feed or heal or eliminate.'

'Why are you pessimistic tonight?' said du Pré.

'Because I hope you'll contradict me, Robert.'

'I do. You know I'm an optimist.'

'So am I,' said Hassid. 'So am I. If it weren't for an idiotic, illogical, unintellectual faith in our stupid, unreasonable, instinctive humanity, who'd want to live? Or think it worthwhile to have lived?'

He rang a handbell, and Francesca answered it.

'Francesca,' said Hassid, 'bring us some of that delicious *mille-feuilles* you made yesterday. M. du Pré has been saying how much he likes it.'

Du Pré shook his head tolerantly and said,

'All right—all right. I agree to be the plumpest civil servant in Algeria.'

*

Listening to the music with his eyes closed, Hassid's face had a priestly quality; the heavy, dignified nose was balanced by the high forehead, his strong mouth by the white hair, his powerful, well-kept hands by his wrists, which seemed strangely delicate. His socks had concertinaed at his ankles, and his legs were spread apart as if too heavy to be raised. In the distance there was a rumble, perhaps of thunder, perhaps of a plastic bomb, perhaps of a demolition. Du Pré, with his legs crossed, didn't stir. Armidal had pronounced the name without an aspirate, but it was unmistakable in his list of those condemned by the OAS. He was sobbing when du Pré had returned, and Vinh was standing contemptuously in front of him with his hands in his pockets.

'What happened?' du Pré asked.

'Nothing,' Vinh replied with an innocent air. 'I asked him a searching question—that's all. And he burst into tears. Very soft, the new generation!'

He took Armidal by his hair, and pulled his head back.

'Leave him alone,' du Pré said sharply.

'It's the first time I put a finger on him,' Vinh replied.

'You'll be interested to know, though, that he made a voluntary statement dealing with the next list of executions. He couldn't remember them all, but he knew a few.'

There was a stench in the air, and du Pré saw on Armidal's trouser leg and shoe the disregarded fragments of vomit.

'What did you do to him?' he asked.

'Nothing, sir,' Vinh repeated with a controlled insolence. 'I know my orders, sir . . . He's got a delicate stomach . . . Except for this.'

He handed him the list, and du Pré asked,

'When for?'

'They need higher authority,' said Vinh. 'They're waiting for Palice to get back from the Sahara—and that's not till Thursday. The signal is "Sunset".'

Armidal, encouraged by the restraining presence of du Pré, had recovered his defiance.

'And you two are next—both of you—you sods!'

*

Hassid was a condemned name on a list, waiting for the seal of a General he had never known, sustained by a duty that made him indifferent to his accusers, his judges and his sentence.

At the end of the allegro the doctor opened his eyes and said to du Pré,

'There is no question about it. Our dying begins the day we are born. I knew that very early in my life as a doctor. My father used to say it—and he at last went to his death as I will go eventually. Perhaps sooner—perhaps later.'

'But life is to be lived,' said du Pré. 'It's there to be enjoyed—perhaps it's a discipline for the soul—perhaps even a stage in its purification. I don't think of the body as an expendable shell of the spirit. It's an agency—to be preserved and used and treasured.'

He stood up, and drew a deep breath.

'Life is for living—all the happiness we can live through our mortal bodies. Is there anything wrong in that?'

'No,' said Hassid, smiling for the first time that evening, and reducing the gramophone's volume of sound.

'I want everyone to live and be happy,' said du Pré, stretching his arms behind his head and feeling the strength of his body. 'I'm sick of all the killing. I want everyone to be happy and live a thousand years.'

He went over to Hassid, and crouched on his haunches in front of him.

'Listen,' he said. 'In two weeks' time I'm returning to France. I have one more job to do——'

'Completing the catalogue?' Hassid asked, and his eyes smiled ironically.

'Completing the catalogue,' said du Pré, returning his look gravely. 'You've worked pretty hard, Doctor, and you've laid the foundations of the PPPP.'

'Do you think so?' Hassid asked. 'Thank you for saying so.'

'You need a rest,' said du Pré. 'Everyone's entitled to a rest sometimes.'

'Yes,' said Hassid. 'I sometimes feel I'd like a rest.'

'Why don't you have a holiday in France?'

'My dear boy, are we back on that again?'

Hassid frowned, and du Pré rose in exasperation and switched off the gramophone.

'I'm not thinking of you at this moment, Professor Hassid. I know you've had threatening letters—telephone calls——'

'How did you know?'

'—the whole lot. That's your business. But do you think you're entitled to involve Eliane?'

'How does she come into this?' Hassid asked.

'She comes into it because she's your daughter—and if you want her to live, you've got to see that she goes back to France.'

'But of course,' said Hassid, standing. 'If I want her to

live—of course. Of course she must go back to France. Of course!’

He was stammering at the phrase ‘want her to live’, and repeated it.

‘If you want her to live,’ said du Pré brutally, ‘you must yourself see to it that she goes back to France.’

‘When?’

‘As soon as possible—tomorrow.’

‘And how can I persuade her to go?’

‘By going yourself.’

‘But, good God, it’s impossible,’ said Hassid. ‘I can’t pack up overnight, and leave them in the lurch—Gibello, Boutard, Mlle Dulac.’

‘I’m interested in Eliane. Aren’t you?’ said du Pré.

Hassid glanced at him, and didn’t answer. Then he sat down slowly and said,

‘I couldn’t leave at once. No, it’s impossible . . . I’ve got patients.’

‘You’ve been on holiday before. Let someone else look after them.’

‘But the PPPP——’

‘That’ll sort itself out. This trouble’s going on for a long time. If you go, Eliane will go. She won’t leave you alone in Algiers.’

‘But aren’t I alone?’

Hassid looked around the familiar room, and added,

‘I’ve been alone for many years . . . In any case, Robert, how can you be sure—so sure . . .’ His voice trailed away.

Du Pré said,

‘I’m sure, Dr. Hassid. My catalogue is nearly finished. I think you know why I’m sure.’

Hassid looked at him solemnly, and said,

‘Yes.’

Du Pré said,

‘I’ve got to get back. What shall I tell Eliane?’

The old man hunched his shoulders, and reflected.

'Tell her—if she goes on ahead, I'll follow in a week or two when I've cleared up my papers and some of my cases.'

Before du Pré could say anything, he said,

'I've got one remarkable case at Bel Air—a little Moslem boy with a traumatic paraplegia—wounded by a grenade. He's doing extraordinarily well—I'm teaching him archery.'

'That will have to wait,' said du Pré. 'Two weeks is too long, Dr. Hassid.'

'Very well,' said Hassid in resignation. 'A week. But don't rush me.'

'No—I won't rush you.'

'And remember—just a holiday.'

'All right—just a holiday,' said du Pré.

'And my son-in-law, de Croissillon. How will Eliane explain to him?'

'He will be attended to,' said du Pré.

'Have another brandy,' Hassid said.

'No, thank you,' said du Pré. 'I've still got work to do.'

On the way to the door Hassid said,

'Civil wars are the worst of wars . . . Do you know why Cain and Abel fought?'

'No,' said du Pré.

'They fought,' said Hassid, 'about where to build the Temple.'

CHAPTER XIV

THE news of the searches in Bab-el-Oued had filled Francesca with a resentment which she expressed in a running monologue audible throughout the apartment. Most of her family lived in the thickly populated quarter on the other side of the Casbah, and she was accustomed on Sundays to visit them, bringing treats which she had bought with her savings from the house-keeping money. Occasionally she would supplement them with a few additions of tinned foods from the Hassid larder. On Sunday mornings her personality became transformed. Without an apron, she became almost indistinguishable from any of the other elderly women in black dresses and hats who made their way from Mass to call on friends and relatives in the other parts of the city. The only characteristic which set Francesca apart was the tapestried bag which contained the week's pillage. She carried it with a good-humoured nonchalance, referring to it always as her 'travelling companion', and explaining its contents as a few gifts for her nephews. Once when she deposited it on the floor while she adjusted her hat, Eliane picked it up in order to help Francesca with it to the lift. Her shoulders had sagged under the weight. The bag seemed loaded with metal. It was, in fact, full of tinned tongue, which had become hard to buy in Algiers. Francesca had made a corner of two dozen tins in the market at the Rue de la Victoire, and was taking what she considered a fair percentage to her brother Angelino, Maria his wife, and a number of other relatives in Bab-el-Oued. It was a habit which she delighted in. Arriving as a Lady Bountiful who enjoyed the protection of the famous Hassid, she enjoyed great prestige in her family.

The sealing-off of the quarter seemed to her not merely an

offence against Angelino and Maria but a personal injury to herself. The previous day, a Sunday, she had gone by bus to Bab-el-Oued, only to find it surrounded by troops with the main entrance cordoned off with barbed wire. After joining for half an hour in the imprecations of the crowds assembled outside the barriers and calling greetings through the hedge of troops to the Europeans on the other side, she had returned voiceless and footsore to the Rue Michelet, where after an hour's recuperation she had begun a loud soliloquy, which had lasted for nearly twelve hours, on the evils of the Government in Paris.

The reason why her tirade had died down was that since early in the morning loudspeaker cars had been touring the streets calling on the population to assemble for a march to 'bring comfort to our brothers and sisters in Bab-el-Oued'. The general strike had made things especially difficult. There was no public transport, and she couldn't expect the doctor to take her to the suburb and wait in the hope that she'd be allowed through the barbed wire. But now she had another chance. 'March with banners and flags,' said the loudspeaker. 'Show our brothers and sisters that they're not forgotten.' It was one thing to walk alone; quite another to walk with ten thousand demonstrators.

The calendar on Dr. Hassid's desk said March 25th—a day out of date. Francesca turned it to March 26th. This would be a memorable day. The broadcasting vans were playing marching songs—songs of the Legion, 'We the Africans', familiar songs and songs she didn't know. Outside, the houses were already beflagged as for a fête. Monday, March the 26th. For some reason that she couldn't understand, Francesca felt gay. Her arthritic pains had magically disappeared. The music made her feel that she could fly, not walk, to Bab-el-Oued. Up above, a helicopter whirled and rattled like a friendly insect. It rose, hovered, descended, inspected, hopped and buzzed off with a neighbourly inquisitiveness which Francesca rather

liked. The helicopter was inoffensive. It was only looking. Generally speaking, Francesca didn't like the Republican Guards whose machine this was. She had heard too many stories from her father of how they treated the public in demonstrations. But March the 26th seemed to change a lot of things. It was a happy day, and she went to the larder and took an extra tin of tuna fish for luck.

From Hassid's study she could hear another of the interminable announcements from the Prefecture issuing from the radio. Nowadays the Professor kept it on almost all the time, although everyone knew that the only broadcasts that mattered were the pirate broadcasts on the TV wavelength. Somebody or other was delivering an order calling that demonstrations were forbidden, and requiring the population to keep off the streets. 'Failing this, the forces of order will disperse the demonstrators with all necessary firmness.'

Francesca sneered at the instrument, craned her neck over the balcony, and saw that the street was full of a one-way traffic moving steadily like a crowd going to a football match, in the direction of the Boulevard Laferrière. She lugged her travelling-bag from the ground, and after a quick look at the apartment to make sure that everything was in order, hurried to the street, eager to take her place in the fun.

Everyone was treating the general strike as if it were a public holiday. On the terraced gardens, leading up from the Boulevard Laferrière to the War Memorial, family groups in their best clothes had gathered as if it were Sunday to picnic on the benches. The military authorities had banned traffic along the roads leading from the centre to Bab-el-Oued, with the result that everybody seemed to be sitting, strolling or standing. The ex-servicemen had brought along banners. A number of mayors were wearing sashes. And around each kernel of the tricolour the OAS marshals of the demonstration congregated.

Francesca wiped her forehead when she reached the Boulevard. The day, which had begun overcast, had turned out

warm, and she half-wished she hadn't added that last tin of tuna fish to the load. But she was comforted when she saw that, stretching right up the steps of the Forum beyond the War Memorial, there was a gay concourse of women and girls in variegated dresses and all carrying bags, who were going to show Paris that they couldn't treat the lads of Bab-el-Oued as if they were a disease to be put in quarantine.

She sat on a bench at the corner of the Avenue Pasteur, looking across the Boulevard to the Rue d'Isly, where a military cordon of conscripts and Moslem troops sealed off the entrance.

'When do we move off?' she asked a young student who was sitting beside her with a flag held upright between his knees.

'Three o'clock,' he said, with a glance at his watch. 'It's just half-past two.'

'I've seen you before,' she said, scrutinizing his thin young face. 'Were you one of Dr. Hassid's pupils?'

'Yes,' said the student. 'How is the old boy? He's getting a bit past it, isn't he?'

'No,' said Francesca indignantly, taking up her carrier. 'Professor Hassid is the best doctor in Algiers. If you ever——'

One of the marshals shouted an order, and his strident voice left Francesca in mid-sentence. As if moved by a central nervous system, the limbs of the procession began to articulate themselves, assembling from the Plateau des Glières where the main body of the four or five thousand demonstrators had gathered and from the steps leading to the Forum where the stragglers had lined themselves, in the direction of the troops who stood with their rifles at the ready.

The standard-bearers, twenty abreast, led the march preceded by three young men. A marshal called the slogan, 'Algeria—French Algeria!' Immediately the crowd took up the cry, rhythmically, till it became the cadence of their slow march towards the massed troops.

Francesca found herself in a cheerful company of working women who, like herself, had relations in Bab-el-Oued. As they

walked they exchanged gossip and jokes. Thirty yards behind the banners carried with military precision by ex-soldiers, with the 'Marseillaise', the 'African Song', and the slogan 'Algeria—French Algeria' shouted and screamed in an exhilarating cacophony, she felt secure as nowadays she rarely felt in the city. She knew that the conscripts from France who were being used to bar their way couldn't but join in when they saw the sincerity and fervour of all the young men and women, their brothers and sisters, whose only wish was to retain their joint heritage for France. Swept along in the irresistible tide, she joined in the cheers when, after a whisper, a rumour and then a shout of triumph the news was spread that the first barrage of troops at the Rue d'Isly had given way under the pressure of the other stream of the procession, and that the demonstrators were advancing on what one of the ex-service-men called 'a wide front'. 'Salan to power!' someone shouted. 'Salan to power!' 'De Gaulle to the gallows!' came another cry. And Francesca joined in with a scream, 'De Gaulle to the gallows!' 'Algeria—French Algeria!' The antiphon came, 'Salan to power!'

After they had advanced a few hundred yards, she observed that the banner in front had come to a halt, and the crowd, pressing behind, was being exhorted good-humouredly by the marshals to mark time. Together with her companions, she put down her bag, and rested her aching arm. Some of the demonstrators continued to shout their slogans in a steadfast chant, but gradually the clamour died away as it became clear that the standard-bearers had come to a stop, face to face with the cordon of troops stretching from pavement to pavement across the Rue d'Isly under the command of a young lieutenant.

'What's going on?' Francesca asked her neighbour.

At that moment, in the silence that had fallen on the front ranks of the demonstrators, they heard the click of rifles being loaded. The sound was unmistakable, and some of the older men began to shuffle their feet.

'Listen,' said the student marshal to the lieutenant. They seemed no older than each other, and he spoke with a courteous familiarity. 'We're unarmed. All we want to do is go through, and show our solidarity with Bab-el-Oued. We don't want any trouble. So let's get on with it.'

'I'm sorry,' said the lieutenant, looking from his men to the massed demonstrators pressing against them from about five yards away. 'My orders are to stop you. I'm sorry, old chap. Those are my orders.'

He had only been three months in Algeria, and his face, smooth from a winter at headquarters, was laced with sweat.

'Well, we're going through,' said the marshal. He faced the standard-bearers, and raised his right hand. Immediately the banners which had been lowered during his negotiations were hoisted in the air by the front ranks. Their elevation was the signal for a great cheer from the crowd, and a new chant of 'Algeria—French Algeria!' The flags gave the demonstrators a gala air, and slowly the vast procession, like an overcrowded train heaving into motion from a standstill, began to advance.

'Tell them to get back,' the lieutenant said. 'I've orders to fire.'

The students moved forward foot by foot with the banners till they were almost face to face with the cordon. The lieutenant looked around him with a kind of desperation, and called out, 'Ten yards—retire!'

The cordon began to yield slowly under the weight of the demonstrators, who as they saw the soldiers giving way began to cheer.

'Long live the Army!' someone shouted, and the cry was taken up as the demonstrators, singing and shouting, flowed through and around the first barrier like a wave through an outpost of rocks. Pressed back towards the post office, the soldiers began to re-form.

With a sudden anxiety, Francesca sensed that the fun was over. The expression on the faces of those pushing and

scuffling around her had changed as well. Some were trying to get out of the crush which had now begun to make the centre swell like a wave trying to break. At that moment Francesca decided that she had done enough demonstrating, and would go to Bab-el-Oued when the excitement had died down.

'Please!' she gasped, her arms clamped to her side by the swaying crowd. 'Please!'

Her glance implored those around her, but they were no longer free to make a way. The shouts had become a sustained howl, and on the pavement Djamil Bossoni, a Moslem soldier who had served for six years in the French Army and had been commended in the field, saw like a sleepwalker confronting a nightmare the tricolour mob advancing, as he thought, to lynch him. Four feet away, threatening him with a banner, was a youth in shirt-sleeves. Bossoni's finger contracted on his trigger; he heard no sound, but the youth knelt down with his blood pumping slowly over the pavement. Bossoni continued to squeeze, and the leading flags dipped as if in salute. The howl of defiance changed into a concert of screams, individual and personal; in reply, the other soldiers in the cordon fired into the demonstrators, who now parted in the centre as if a vast cleaver had been driven into them.

Flung apart in the panic from the group which had carried her forward, Francesca lay shivering on her face in the porch of a chemist's shop as the troops sprayed the crumbling demonstrators with their fire. The helicopter meandered along the route, its roar an accompaniment to the bursts of fire. Francesca, her fingers bleeding from the graze where she tried to dig her nails into the flagstones, saw a woman upright in the road with a baby in her arms, pirouetting like an insane dancer, till a man rushed out and dragged her to the ground. She clenched her eyes and called on St. Francis, and opened them to see a plate-glass window on the other side of the street shatter above three men and a woman lying on the pavement. Falling in a graceful parabola, a tear-gas bomb was lobbed from

the helicopter and struck the ground with a light thud, followed by a soundless drift of smoke which enveloped the demonstrators in its vicinity and drove them choking, half-blind, and coughing into the shop-fronts and the doorways and the alleys.

Within seconds, the open ground in front of the General Post Office was strewn with dead and wounded, shot down by automatic fire, and the singing was replaced by a terrible discord—the screams of the fleeing wounded, curses, and, close to Francesca, the cracking voice of the lieutenant hysterically calling on his men to cease fire. A few yards away, a young Frenchman, a clerk in the accounts department of the Milk Bar, whom Francesca had often met in the Rue Michelet, was dying from three bullet wounds in his back. He lay on his face, and alternated his groans with obscenities. When Francesca raised her head, their eyes met, and he half-smiled and said, ‘Help me’, and Francesca in a paralysis of terror didn’t move.

The firing stopped suddenly. The lieutenant had made himself heard, and the cordons re-formed. For a whole minute no one stirred. Then a youth rushed from one of the doorways carrying a tricolour flag which he spread over the sprawled corpse of a marshal with an armband. At the streets leading from the square, some of the demonstrators had regathered, and were screaming ‘Murderers!’ The soldiers stood, immobile and white-faced. Already the ambulances could be heard on their way from the hospital, and their wailing mingled with the screams of rage and pain and despair of mothers and wives and husbands and children, separated, grief-stricken and mourning, who had begun to wander among the bloodstained bundles and débris of the square.

‘All right, Ma, it’s all over,’ said a white-faced worker who helped Francesca to rise. He began to dust her skirt, but she pushed him away since she felt it was unseemly for a man to touch her. She began to cough from the tear-gas which had blown towards her, and she said between the paroxysms,

'Oh, the swine! The swine! They'll make me spit blood yet . . . They'll make me spit blood. Where's my basket?'

Labouring to breathe, she groped in the drifting miasma for her shopping-basket. A woman put a handkerchief over Francesca's mouth and guided her from the square with the survivors who were returning to the Boulevard Laferrière in bitter, resentful cortèges.

*

By the evening, the authorities had produced their own bulletin of the day's incidents. 'Uncontrolled elements of the OAS had wilfully defied orders, and incited the population to advance on military installations. The tragic events had, however, been precipitated by the actions of provocateurs, firing on National Service and Moslem soldiers from balconies in the Rue d'Isly. This had, unhappily, produced a riposte which had resulted in thirty-seven deaths and a hundred and forty wounded. The authorities wished to express their profound sympathy with the victims and their relatives who had innocently suffered the consequences of yet another cowardly defiance by the OAS of Government orders.'

*

Vedoni left the crowded drawing-room where Madame de Grandaye was receiving the reports of OAS observers, some of them still covered with the dust of the Rue d'Isly. As a colonel's wife, she had to behave with discretion in her support of the Secret Army, and so she had formed a body called the Friends of the Red Cross which was, in fact, the overtly philanthropic title of the women who supplied the OAS with medical aid and comforts, and gathered and distributed information. Her husband had been transferred to Germany after the 'Colonels' Rebellion', but she had decided to stay behind in her flat in the Rue Michelet, which became one of the principal meeting-places of the OAS leadership. Her husband's status protected her from molestation either by the police or the Army. Some of those who frequented her flat

believed from her easy, familiar manner with Vedoni that he was her lover. This wasn't true. Her lover was a black-haired restaurant proprietor, a Corsican called Franchetti who had tired of her long ago and who wanted most urgently to live in Marseilles. But she liked Vedoni; she liked his fierceness and his irony, and the way he made the lover cringe who made her quail. When she put her flat at the disposal of the OAS, she was doing more than she considered her patriotic duty. She was acquiring a domestic ally.

She also acquired Fariz, Vedoni's Afghan hound, which followed him like a bodyguard from room to room but stayed with her, to Franchetti's indignation, during Vedoni's absences.

In her small library next to the drawing-room, de Croissillon was waiting with several other members of General Palice's staff. The wireless was playing military music, interrupted from time to time by Special Code instructions. When Vedoni entered, with his dog lazily padding behind him, de Croissillon said irritably,

'Do we need the animal?'

'I don't know about "we",' said Vedoni. 'I need him.'

'What's the news?' asked Alport.

'You won't get it from that,' said Vedoni, switching off the radio. 'They've cooked up some figures of casualties. I've been down to the Mustapha . . . My guess is that the real figures are about twice as much as Rocher Noir's. It's normal. That's the way officials work. If it's the enemy, divide by two.'

'Those Moslems!' said Alport. 'I'd swear they were FLN-ers in French uniform.'

'They were saying in the cafeteria,' said Vedoni, 'that the troops who fired first were Moslems wearing caps with hammer-and-sickles.'

'That's what I heard,' said Alport. 'Just what I heard.'

'And I tell you,' said Vedoni, sitting at the table and stroking Fariz's drooping ears, 'I tell you it's crap—crap, crap, crap. Don't you agree, my beauty?'

He addressed himself to the dog as if the others present weren't qualified to sustain conversation with him.

'And even if it were true,' said Vedoni, 'we'd have to pretend it's not true.'

He suddenly turned on de Croissillon with his eyes red under his thin eyebrows, and the others could see for the first time that the lids were swollen, whether from the tear-gas or some other more personal cause.

'We've got them,' he shouted, banging his fist on the table so that the dog leapt anxiously to its feet and barked a single short bark. 'Don't you see! If the FLN kill Frenchmen, it's nothing—it's war—but if French soldiers kill Frenchmen—Frenchmen demanding their rights as Frenchmen—then de Gaulle stands condemned for his policy. Then the OAS is vindicated in France. Then our martyrs today have died for some purpose—not for nothing.'

The dog sniffed at Vedoni's shoes, only to receive a shove for its curiosity.

'The importance of what happened today is that it gives us a green light. Everything that happens from tomorrow onwards is our justified reply.'

He lit a cigarette, and rested his leg on the dog's back.

'“The OAS answers.” It isn't a bad slogan.'

'We've got to wait for Palice,' de Croissillon said.

'Why?' Vedoni asked.

'We've got to wait till he gets back from the south.'

'Not a bit of it. We've got to answer at once.'

The two men stood and confronted each other, and the others watched them in silence.

'How do you propose that we answer them?' de Croissillon asked.

'The first reply,' said Vedoni crisply, 'must be “Sunset”.'

'I don't like it,' de Croissillon said. 'I think we should wait for Palice's orders.'

Madame de Grandaye knocked at the door and put her head into the room.

'I'm so sorry to interrupt,' she said, 'but there are drinks in the other room. You must be needing something.'

There was a clamour of thanks, and the room emptied except for Vedoni and de Croissillon who stood thoughtfully side by side.

'One other matter I wanted to mention to you,' said Vedoni, and he faced de Croissillon with an expression of malice mingled with regret. 'You must tell your wife to keep away from that fellow du Pré.'

'What do you mean?' de Croissillon asked, putting his hands in his pockets.

'I mean,' said Vedoni, 'that du Pré's a *barbouze*.'

'Du Pré.'

'Yes—du Pré. Your friend—old Hassid's friend—your wife's friend.'

'What's du Pré got to do with Eliane?'

'She's been seeing him,' said Vedoni. 'She's been seeing him at Sidi-Ferruch and here at the Hôtel d'Angleterre. He's going to get hurt. Tell her to keep away.'

He was watching de Croissillon's hands, and he smiled with satisfaction.

CHAPTER XV

As soon as the Empire Cinema opened its doors, the long queue began to press forward. Above the ticket office a huge placard advertising a film called *Ambiguous Surrender* showed a half-naked woman pressing an opium pipe between her breasts. But hardly anyone gave it a glance. At a desk with the notice 'Mail Distribution', a man in shirt-sleeves sat directing the queue towards trestle-tables, each marked with initial letters.

Since the murder of a number of Moslem postmen, the Empire had been requisitioned by the authorities for the collection of mail, and each morning an untidy, anxious line stretched along the streets like a queue for a popular film, except that the men and women who waited for hours had no hope of entertainment, only the likelihood that when they reached the sorting-clerks the reply to the question 'Anything for me?' would be 'Nothing!'

Each day since they had been living in the Aletti, Eliane rose early and hurried to take her place in the queue where, the first time she had gone, she had been rewarded by a card from Christine. Since then, like a gambler who succeeds with a first throw and expects similar luck with each new bid, Eliane had approached the letter C with excitement, and after an exhortation each time to the clerk to 'Look again', had passed it with astonishment mingled with jealousy of those who carried away their envelopes, when she found that there was nothing for her.

After the shooting outside the General Post Office, the queues, vivacious and conversational to begin with, had become morose and mistrustful, no longer spilling into the

roadway, but huddling against the slogan-covered walls as if afraid that some of the cars swishing down from the upper districts might suddenly spray them with bullets.

'I think I'd better come with you,' de Croissillon had said to Eliane at breakfast. The radio was giving a new commentary on the demonstration which had taken place three days earlier; it was apologetic and conciliatory, and de Croissillon listened with an impassive expression.

'Oh, no,' said Eliane. 'You mustn't trouble. I feel as safe in the queue as anywhere. When there are lots of you together, you somehow feel secure.'

She smiled to him gratefully and half-shyly across the table on the balcony. Since he had struck her, he hadn't referred to the incident nor even mentioned the fading bruise at the side of her face. They rarely spoke of personal matters, and with a spontaneous respect guarded each a private side of the room as if a frontier lay between them. Their conversation was courteous and confined to the news of the day, but their old habit of inquiring about their activities was broken. And no longer sharing a common experience beyond their meals and accommodation, they looked at each other from time to time in surprise, as if they were strangers met haphazard.

'No,' de Croissillon insisted, 'I think it safer if I come with you. I can look after you.'

And Eliane smiled to him again, and he smiled back to her, calmly and ironically.

'Well, let's hurry,' she said. 'I like to be at the head of the queue.'

She turned away, remembering that she had arranged to meet du Pré at one o'clock, and when she looked back she saw that her husband's face had become set and brooding. So it had often been in the last few days, when she caught sight unexpectedly of her husband's abstracted expression.

Across the road from the Empire the gardeners were watering the geraniums, and the air was full of the fresh morning smell of wet earth and leaves in the sunshine. A group of Europeans were drinking coffee, and the two policemen ordering the queue looked at them with envy.

'Why won't you go back to Paris?' de Croissillon asked Eliane in an easy tone.

'Why?' she repeated. He was lighting a cigarette, and had asked the question with the same nonchalance as he might have asked why she was wearing a plain pink dress instead of a striped one.

'Yes—why?' he repeated, snapping the lighter together.

'Why should I?'

'Yes,' said de Croissillon gently. 'That's the question I'm asking you.'

The queue shuffled forwards a few paces, and de Croissillon and Eliane moved with it.

'Some people *will* push,' said a thin woman at Eliane's elbow, complaining of those behind her. 'No manners at all.'

'Yes,' said Eliane, hoping that the conversation might be diverted from her husband's question.

'Well?' he asked, and he smiled.

'I don't know,' she answered. 'Perhaps—it's inertia.'

'Perhaps,' said de Croissillon, 'you don't want to leave those you love.'

'What do you mean?' said Eliane, turning to him and looking at him steadily. He had returned to a theme which had now become familiar, and she forced her expression into an unnatural composure.

'I mean,' said de Croissillon calmly, 'perhaps you don't want to leave your father—or me.'

'It's true,' said Eliane. 'I am worried about my father.'

'I told him,' said de Croissillon, 'he ought to leave.'

His expression had become self-absorbed. 'You too, Eliane

—you too should leave with him . . . I must go to Oran this afternoon.'

'When will you be back?'

She had asked the question too quickly, and she regretted it.

'In a few days,' de Croissillon answered, as if he hadn't noticed her eagerness. 'I'll send you a telegram if I can't telephone.'

The queue made a sudden lunge forward, and Eliane found herself inside the gloomy cinema at the table under the initial C.

'Anything for me?' she asked. The clerk shuffled the letters in his tray, and said,

'Here you are,' and handed her an envelope addressed in a woman's handwriting to the Comte de Croissillon. After a fleeting glance, she gave it to her husband. The clerk was still scrabbling, and she waited tensely for him to finish his search. 'Here you are—here's another, and another.' She clutched her two letters joyfully. One, she could see from the handwriting, was from Philippe, the other from Christine.

At the cinema exit where they stood among the others who were opening their letters, de Croissillon said,

'I think I'll leave you now, Eliane. Will you be back to lunch?'

'No.'

'In that case'—de Croissillon hesitated—'there's something I want to tell you.'

'What's that?'

'I want you to stop seeing du Pré.'

'What do you mean?' she asked indignantly, and her indignation, forced and insincere, transformed itself into a genuine anger against her husband. 'Robert's a friend of Daddy's—that's all he has ever been.'

She stood stiffly holding the letters as de Croissillon bent down to kiss both her cheeks.

'Keep away from du Pré,' he said gently. Then he turned on his heel, and she saw his tall figure in his grey suit disappearing among the crowds.

Standing in the street, she hurriedly read the letters. Christine's was chiefly concerned with her bicycle and pony. But Philippe's letter was more specific, more laboured in the writing, at once protective and helpless. He had looked at the map and counted the miles, and there were two thousand and sixteen hours to go before he would see her again. And if Papa couldn't come back, would she be sure to come back alone. And he hoped she was enjoying her stay in Algiers because he missed her every second of every minute of every hour of every day.

The letter was signed, 'Your ever-thinking son, Philippe.' And Eliane repeated to herself, 'Your ever-thinking son.'

*

While du Pré waited for Eliane's car to appear on the stretch of coastal road which he could see from the verandah of the Marignan Restaurant, he re-read his wife's letter. He sipped an Amer Picon and thought of her, walking with the children through the tumbled fern to the menhirs in the forest, far from the glittering-white city and the cobalt sea, from Eliane and the list of murders and the warrants.

'My dear Robert,' it began. Her handwriting was clear, carefully spaced and without crossings-out.

'Your letter arrived rather crumpled after what seemed like a long journey. I was pleased to get it, but I wish you wouldn't write in such a scrawl. I like to think you have made new friends and met old friends in Algiers, and that you are having fun going to the Opera, etc. I always thought the Press exaggerates everything, so I wasn't surprised to learn from you that things aren't so bad in Algiers as the Paris papers make out. It is, of course, the same here. Everyone is talking about plastic bombs, but no one has actually *heard* one! Luckily, the only people they scare are foreigners, and it is possible now to walk down the Champs-Élysées and hear a few French voices.

'All the same, I hope you will be very careful. In Henri's

opinion, the present political situation is fluid, and I feel that you as a civil servant would make a mistake if you identified yourself with one side or the other. Perhaps you will be annoyed with me for saying this, but that is my view, and, as you know, we from Nevers tend to speak our minds!

'Here at home, everyone is well, and Claire, Julienne, Geoffroy, Henri and Victor Blaisse send you their regards. Victor told me to tell you he finds it rather eccentric of you to be emigrating to Algeria at a time when most people are coming home.

'The children both had strep. throats a fortnight ago, and I was rather worried when they ran high temperatures. But Henri was an angel. He came and sat for hours, and Mother was over here twice.

'One of the reasons I delayed answering your letter was that I took the children for a week to Fontainebleau. Do you remember it? I was feeling terribly tired myself, and didn't really want to go, but Henri insisted. He has been such a good friend. We stayed at that lovely hotel just at the end of the forest, and I can't begin to tell you how beautiful it was. The children made a lot of friends in the village, and were no trouble at all. I went for a lot of walks in the forest, and once went over to Vézelay. Henri came down to see the children, and took us all for a drive. He took the snaps I enclose.

'There were all sorts of wild flowers in the woods. I wish you could have seen them. By the time you come home, the spring flowers will be over, and that will be a pity.

'Don't work too hard, but don't have too much fun either. We miss you and send our love.

Louise.'

Du Pré examined the photographs wryly. Louise stood in the middle, smiling happily in a short cotton dress, with her arms around the shoulders of the children. René seemed to have grown; his legs were long and brown and he was scowling as if he didn't want to have his photograph taken. But Linette

was laughing with the coquettish laugh of a girl of ten; and du Pré felt a pang that it was directed to the shadow that fell across the foreground of the photograph. And the pang grew that in his absence there were others who could enjoy the presence of his children and even—he admitted it reluctantly to himself—that his wife no longer asked him to return with the urgency of her former letters. She looked content, and du Pré felt half-glad, half-provoked by her self-satisfaction.

There was still a month to go before his tour ended. But when he put the letter away and took from his pocket the warrant which would bring his main duties to an end—the general warrant for the arrest of the members of the Hydra Network—he made a rapid estimate that after all the formalities of identification had been completed, he might have to return to Paris in less than a week. The specified names were headed by Palice; then followed a number of ex-officers with their *noms-de-guerre*; deserters like Rigaud; Vedoni; and, in a separate column, de Croissillon. The Government had decided on a collective arrest, which they hoped would break the back of the OAS, but the problem had been to make the arrests in a single action when the leadership was assembled in Algiers or Oran. They knew that the OAS were planning a new operation to be called ‘Sunset’. At the Villa Rouchard, they had given the code-name ‘Straitjacket’ to their own counter-plan. It was a simple one. The security guards with a *barbouze* attached to each squad would move in with military support at 4 a.m.—one hour before the lifting of the morning curfew—and arrest thirty-seven named OAS leaders with a general warrant which they could use to bring in any other suspects. Du Pré’s job was to co-ordinate the Intelligence of the operation, and to decide on its timing. At the last meeting in the Villa Rouchard, he had recommended postponing the arrests until the return of ex-General Palice, but Colonel Carnot, his commanding officer, had said bitingly,

‘Do you think de Croissillon will be lonely without him?’

And afterwards, du Pré had asked himself why he had wanted to postpone action, and he gave himself the answer with distaste.

Now there was no more room or excuse for postponement. Palice was on his way back to Algiers, and they had received reports that several other members of his staff who had been out in the *bled* were returning to the city. 'Straitjacket' would be precautionary as well as punitive. It would anticipate also the scorched-earth policy about which Palice had made a *pronunciamento* at Sétif. And du Pré thought in retrospect that it had been wise to allow Vedoni to strut about in insolent liberty; it was through his movements that the Villa Rouchard had been able to trace the other leaders. He had made their plans explicit. And he was the one du Pré wanted to see on trial in Paris.

And de Croissillon. He too had preened himself when the OAS claimed their successes. He too had flaunted his freedom to come and go under the protection of the local police, his army friends and the functionaries of the Gouvernement Général. And du Pré wondered about Eliane—what she would feel and think, and how much she would understand, and how she would assess her duty and his and the loyalty to her husband which might transcend an infidelity, and if there was anything which might exceed that loyalty.

She was standing at his table, and he rose to greet her. He bowed over her hand, and they smiled at each other, and in that moment his anxieties disappeared.

'I've got news for you,' said du Pré.

'Good news?' Eliane asked.

'I think so,' said du Pré. 'It's possible that I may be recalled to Paris—in about a week.'

She looked at him, and her eyes shone, and she didn't speak.

'It means,' said du Pré, toying with the pottery vase that stood between them, 'you can go on ahead with your father . . .

I'll make a date with you in Paris . . . One o'clock for lunch at L'Abeille on April 15th. How would that be?"

She shook her head slowly.

"Why not?" du Pré asked. "Are you turning me down?"

"No," said Eliane gravely. "I will never turn you down—whatever happens. But I'm superstitious."

"I thought you were a rationalist."

"I find I'm not—not entirely. I'm beginning to think that ~~one~~ we must have faith."

"What are you superstitious about?"

"I'm superstitious about making plans—about arranging to be happy at any other time than the present—the moment we're sharing together."

"That's nonsense."

Du Pré took Eliane's hand in his and said,

"I plan to be very happy with you."

"How?"

"I don't know—except that I plan to be with you and that's the beginning and end of all my happiness."

Eliane released his hand, and said,

"Robert—I think Walter knows about us."

"Perhaps that'll make life easier . . . How do you know?"

"I don't know. I'm not sure. All he said was "Keep away from du Pré." "

Du Pré went on eating, and asked,

"Did he say why?"

"No—I can't remember. All I know is that—it was strange—he became very gentle—but somehow, it wasn't gentle at all. It was terribly menacing."

"Are you worried?"

"Yes."

"Well, don't be. I promise you that in two or three days' time you won't have a care in the world. You'll be in Paris with your father."

"And you?"

'I'll have packed my bags.'

'And then?'

'Then, as the Moslems say, "It's with God."'

Du Pré reached out for two sprigs of twin cherries in a bowl on the next table, and said to Eliane, 'I'm going to adorn you.'

A man and a woman who had taken a table near by watched them with curiosity.

'Lean forward,' said du Pré.

Eliane leant forward, and du Pré hung two red cherries ~~over~~ each of her ears. She looked at herself in the looking-glass, and said,

'They're the prettiest pendants I've ever had.'

'They're on the loveliest face I've ever seen,' said du Pré. 'Now I'm going to feed you with your earrings.'

As he took the cherries from her ears, the woman at the next table switched on a transistor set. It was adjusted to the wavelength the OAS used for its broadcasts, and they heard a few bars of a martial tune. Then a voice enunciated clearly, 'Sunset.' Du Pré put the cherries on the table. Then there was a two seconds' pause. 'Sunset,' the voice said again. Then a third time; and a fourth.

'What's the matter?' Eliane asked, watching du Pré's face.

'I must get back to the city,' said du Pré. He took a five-thousand-franc note and put it on the table. 'I'm sorry, darling, I must get back. I'll talk to you tomorrow morning.'

He pressed one of the cherries into her mouth, ate the other himself, and ran to his CV2 in the car park.

After Francesca had cleared away his lunch, which he took alone, Dr. Hassid returned to his study and sat drinking coffee while he waited for Gibello to arrive. His own university courses had come to an end soon after Vedoni had led the walk-out, and after a series of explosions in the science laboratories, the Faculty had decided to suspend all lectures

until further notice. The empty theatres, the idle attendants and the groups of students lounging by the fountains reminded Hassid each time he passed the University, only a few hundred yards from his home, that whatever else might happen, the life of every teacher had been curtailed by the aborted term.

He pulled out the drawer containing the files of his lectures, and turned the pages at random.

'In the thoracic cord lesion, the beneficial effect of this procedure is to restore the patient's upright position. In cervical cord lesions with tetraplegia . . .' He put the papers down. The lecture was to have been given in the amphitheatre of the University on June 1st, but now he had no idea whether he would ever deliver it. At the end of the week he would be in France. He had discussed the matter with the Committee of the PPPP, and they had unanimously agreed that he should try and stir public opinion in Paris so that leading men and women—politicians, trade unionists, authors and clergy—would have the courage to come to Algiers and speak openly to the hesitant and intimidated liberals who would then know that they weren't abandoned. He was reluctant to leave for France. He knew that, involved with his public responsibility, there was the private satisfaction that Eliane had promised to leave immediately after his departure. And he had spoken of his doubts to Gibello.

Hassid thought of Gibello affectionately. Everything about the ex-docker had a massive quality—his hand with his splayed fingers, his legs, his voice, his bulbous nose, his generosity. He had said to Hassid, 'Why shouldn't your daughter go back to Paris? Not everyone has a father called Hassid. She's a nuisance to us if she stays on. She's a hostage.'

'What about your own children?' Hassid asked.

Gibello laughed and accentuated each word by stubbing his cigar in the ashtray.

'We, Professor, aren't Parisians. We're Algerians—our feet are black with the dust of Bab-el-Oued.'

But when, later on, Hassid turned quickly, he saw that Gibello's face seemed to have fallen in, the cheeks sagging into dewlaps, the eyes empty and focused on a remote horizon, the temples sweating.

He expected Gibello at two o'clock, and he switched the radio on as he waited. There were horse-racing results and a sports commentary on the official wavelength, so he moved the controls to the OAS wavelength to which he sometimes tuned-in partly out of curiosity and partly because he liked military music. Francesca entered, and stood with her arms folded, listening with him to a march by Berlioz. The music was faded out and after a pause, the announcer said, 'Sunset.' There was another pause, and the announcer said again, 'Sunset'; then a third time, and a fourth time. Then there was a silence, and Hassid switched off the set.

'Sunset,' said Francesca. 'That's a funny one at this time of the day. Sunset!'

'However bright the sun may shine, The time must come, the sun must set,' said Hassid.

'What's that?' Francesca asked.

'It's from a poem by a man called Heine,' said Hassid.

'It's a sad one.'

'Yes, it is.'

'How does it go again?'

'However bright the sun may shine, The time must come, the sun must set.'

'That's true,' said Francesca.

'Yes,' said Hassid, 'it's true.'

The doorbell rang, and Hassid said,

'Let M. Gibello in.'

While he waited he considered the room which encompassed his history. Over the small bookcase containing a complete set of the *Causeries de Lundi* and the works of Anatole France, all inherited from his father, was a photograph of himself and his wife taken at Biarritz in 1925. She wore a cloche hat and a

shapeless tunic with a short skirt, and he himself looked calmly at the camera through his pince-nez from under a jaunty Panama which complemented his elegant walking-stick. Hassid looked at his old self as at a younger brother with sympathy and tolerance. He picked up the photograph of his son from the desk, and smiled at the serious face. It was a long time ago. Du Pré came into his mind, sitting in the corner of the drawing-room during the war. He and his son had never met, but the thought of them fused in Hassid's mind.

Eliane, like his son, had taken after his wife. Her steady dark eyes, her serene air, her grace when she crossed a room, reminded him each time he saw her of his wife in the year before she died. He was glad she hadn't outlived her son; she would have died twice. *Blessed be the true Judge!* The ancient Hebrew blessing recited in the presence of death recurred to him and he bowed his head, feeling an atavistic acquiescence in a design which, rationally, he couldn't accept.

Through the door he suddenly heard Francesca's voice raised in angry protest, and he slapped his hand on the table in displeasure. Lately he had been obliged to ask her to curb her vehemence when turning away importunate callers who assumed that he engaged in general practice. But Gibello——! Hearing a brawl outside Hassid pulled himself heavily to his feet, thinking that he would have to arrange for Dr. Arnoul, the consultant psychiatrist, to examine Francesca.

The door burst open with Francesca pushed in backwards by two men, followed by a third who held a revolver. Francesca no longer shouted abuse. She stood between Hassid and the leader of the group, a young man with blond hair who wore a suede jacket, and her head trembled from side to side.

'Hassid?' asked the young man.

'I am Professor Hassid,' he answered. The scene wasn't unfamiliar to him. He often stood confronted by strange faces, patients who came with relatives and stood in such a semi-circle with Francesca between them. But whereas in the past

his visitors had waited in humble attitudes as if hoping for a deliverance, these men were sweating and urgent, their gaze moving from side to side in the room, and returning to him like the eyes of dogs on a cornered prey.

'OAS,' said the leader. 'Come on!'

Hassid nodded his head.

'I expected you,' he said. 'I thought you'd come. Francesca, get me my hat and stick.'

With the habit of obedience, she hurried to the hatstand, and brought him his Panama and walking-stick. Hassid took his hat, but the second OAS man intervened, and snatched his walking-stick and broke it in two. Then he tore the telephone from its socket.

'March!' said the leader.

As if in an epileptic fit, Francesca threw herself on the ground, and began screaming in a thin, high-pitched scream like the sound of a flywheel at speed. The second OAS man pushed a cushion over her face for a few seconds restraining her convulsions, then stuffed her mouth with a gag. The one with the revolver forced it into Hassid's back and hustled him forward.

In the sun-filled street outside, no one gave more than a glance at the squad of men who moved with a rush into the black Citroën. As they pressed Hassid's head down in order to get through the door, his glasses fell onto the pavement, and the gunman trod on them. Within seconds the car had accelerated towards El Biar.

*

Twenty minutes later, du Pré reached the Rue Michelet. The concierge, a cripple of the 1914 war, explained to him carefully that Hassid had left with a number of friends. They had escorted him to a Renault car, and had driven off towards the port. He had never seen them before, but they included two ladies, one with a flowered hat. Unfortunately he didn't have the key of the Hassid flat, otherwise he would let du Pré

in so that he could wait. Du Pré listened with his hands in his pockets to the eager expostulations of the concierge. Then he said,

'If you don't let me into the Hassid flat within one minute, I'll have you put away for a year.'

The concierge, grumbling and reluctant, took down several bunches of keys, pretending not to be able to identify the ones he required. The lift had been put out of action by Hassid's ~~caners~~ canes, and the concierge led the way upstairs, dragging his injured leg with an accompaniment of muttered abuse.

Inside the flat Francesca was moaning on the ground. Du Pré knelt by her side, ungagged her mouth and hustled the concierge out. For a few minutes all that Francesca was able to say was, 'They took him—they took him!'

'Who were they, Francesca?' du Pré asked, kneeling at her side as she lay in the armchair, her face suffused and her fingers scrabbling at some imaginary lifeline which would link her with reality.

'Did you know them?' du Pré asked. 'Had you seen any of them before?'

'Yes,' said Francesca.

'Where?' du Pré asked.

'I don't know.'

'What did they look like?'

'I don't know,' said Francesca. 'They took him away.'

'Were they tall? Dark? Short? Fair?'

'Yes,' said Francesca.

'What do you mean?' du Pré asked.

'I don't know,' said Francesca. 'They took him away. They broke his walking-stick.'

Du Pré glanced quickly at the walking-stick, still held together at the centre by a few half-fractured strands of cane, lying near the torn connection of the telephone where the OAS men had thrown it. He brought Francesca a glass of cognac from the bottle in the cabinet. She drank it quickly, and said,

'They hit him and punched him—like that.'

She made a gesture of punching the air with her arthritic fingers clenched into a fist. Du Pré picked up Hassid's lecture notes, which he had left on the table, and sat thinking for a few seconds while Francesca kept saying, 'They hit him—they hit him—like that.'

Du Pré held the broken cane in his hand, and felt the silver knob which he had seen so often in Hassid's palm.

'When Madame de Croissillon comes here—listen to me, Francesca——' he said.

'When Madame de Croissillon comes here——' she repeated.

'Tell her I've gone to bring her father home.'

'Yes,' said Francesca. 'I'll tell her. But I won't be here.'

'Why not?' du Pré asked.

'Because I'm going to Bab-el-Oued—to my brother in the Rue des Moulins. I can't stay here any longer . . . It's too rough, M. du Pré. Too rough . . . Too rough.'

She spoke vacantly as if she was trapped in a cycle without issue.

CHAPTER XVI

BEHIND the shoulder of the President of the Court, Hassid could see the blur of the bushes in the neglected garden. Everything in the villa seemed rank, the inheritance to anarchy of the absentee owners. The chandeliers had been torn from their sockets; the *boiseries* hacked away for firewood; the uncarpeted floors were already scratched and scarred by those who had come to plunder the deserted house, as well as by the OAS commando which was using it as a temporary headquarters. The salon had the smell of a room where a coffin is lying. The President, Colonel Chatelain, his assistant, Colonel Loisier, and the two assessors, Vedoni and Ohlman, smoked American cigarettes, the haze settling in the glum light that fell through the half-shuttered windows. They all wore civilian clothes, Chatelain a grey suit with a black tie. Vedoni alone was dressed with a certain informality. His antelope shoes, his square-ended tie, and his navy-blue suit, designed for elegance, gave him a subaltern air despite the casualness of his outstretched legs and his arm dangling over the back of his chair.

'No,' said Hassid in reply to the President's question, 'I can't plead because I don't recognize this simulacrum as a properly constituted court.'

'We'll see,' said Chatelain mildly. 'We'll see . . . I think you'll find in a few weeks that there are no other courts but ours.'

'This court has as much resemblance to a court of justice,' said Hassid, 'as a Black Mass to a Mass.'

'I doubt very much,' said Chatelain, 'whether you are qualified to make the distinction.' The guards and the judge joined in the laughter.

'Never mind, Hassid. We'll give you every chance to rebut the charges.'

'What charges?' Hassid asked, clutching the chair in front of him. 'I don't know of any charges.'

He peered at the judges, the half-dozen men who lined the walls, and the two guards at the door with the sub-machine-guns.

'Who are these men who broke into my flat? By what right did they——'

Vedoni interrupted him impatiently.

'There's no time for *gemara*, Dr. Hassid.'

'We have one hour,' said Chatelain, in his tired voice. He turned to the bald-headed man who was acting as Clerk of the Court. 'Read the indictment.'

'Early in 1962,' the clerk read rapidly, 'Dr. David Hassid, a professor of the University of Algiers, began to utilize his position to provide aid and comfort to the FLN. On numerous occasions he admitted wounded FLN and AMN activists into his wards or recommended their transfer to other wards. During this period he acted as European liaison officer with Dr. Si Cada, head of the clandestine medical network at the Mustapha Hospital, engaged in assisting the FLN. After the bomb outrage at the Café de la Victoire, Hassid gave medical aid to wounded FLN members, and afterwards arranged for their admission to the Mustapha, taking one there himself in a taxi! That's the first part of the charges, sir.'

'What do you say, Hassid?' Chatelain asked, looking directly at Hassid.

Hassid tried to focus his short-sighted eyes on the Colonel against the sunlight that shone into them; but Chatelain was a smudge, fuzzed at the edges, and Hassid rested his eyes on the tie of the clerk who sat two paces away. The parallel stripes held his attention, and he noticed that they weren't exactly parallel. Nor was the colour of the tie consistent all the way down. The blue of the knot was considerably paler than the

blue below, and Hassid wanted to explain to the clerk that if he changed the position of the knot, its colour would be less likely to fade. He touched his own linen house-coat, and wished that he had been able to put on his jacket before leaving the flat. He would have liked to have appeared suitably dressed before his captors.

'What do you say, Hassid?' Chatelain asked.

'I say nothing,' said Hassid, shaking his head, 'nothing.'

And then,' said the clerk, 'the second part is that Dr. David Hassid set up a body known as the Partisans of the Programme for the Policies of the President——'

'It's a barbarous title,' Chatelain interjected.

'—with the object of resisting the policies of the OAS, thus treacherously betraying the patriotic objects of that organization, namely the preservation of Algeria as an integral part of the Fatherland.'

'What do you say?' Chatelain asked.

'Nothing,' said Hassid, his arm trembling in front of him.

'Nothing—nothing—nothing.'

There was a brief discussion among his judges before Chatelain said,

'Professor Hassid—we are in the middle of a history which we ourselves are making. One day we'll either seem its exploiters or its victims, its heroes or its villains. But however posterity may assess what we've done, it's entitled to the record . . . And we—the OAS—have chosen to judge you today, and set down the transactions of this court'—he waved to a shorthand writer—'so that when, as we pray, Algeria is restored to France, Frenchmen may say, "This and this is what they did and felt, and this is how it happened."'

A young man leaning against the wall turned to his neighbours and said,

'The old man talks a hell of a lot of bull. Why don't we get on with it?'

Hassid raised his head, and said,

'This isn't a court I recognize . . . It's a travesty to legitimize murder. I don't doubt that you've already dug my grave . . . The OAS is a criminal organization, and I am not prepared to plead in front of it.'

Chatelain was about to interrupt, but Hassid continued, raising his hand,

'And yet, having said that, I am prepared—there've been others who have stood in front of unqualified judges and their words are remembered—Blum, I knew him well, stood at Riom, and his judges became the accused—I am prepared now to speak with the hope that perhaps one day—whatever may happen—one day, someone in this court may remember or keep the record—and then at some time, my grandchildren and their children will be able to say that I wasn't silent in face of my accusers, but spoke'—his voice became firm—'and rebutted the slanderers and defended a good cause.'

'That may be,' said Chatelain, taking off his glasses and cleaning them. Hassid spontaneously moved his hand to take off his own glasses, but as he raised it he became conscious of their absence and he felt an impulse of envy that Chatelain had the means to see clearly while he himself would henceforward see only the fogged, unfocused images that menaced him. Chatelain looked at a typescript in front of him, and said,

'I think we'll proceed to my interrogation. Hassid—you have treated a number of Moslem patients both at the Mustapha and at your clinic in Bel Air.'

'That is so—I have treated very many.'

'For wounds?'

'For wounds and for injuries. I have specialized in the paraplegias—and in a country that has been chronically at war——' He didn't finish his sentence.

'How many of your patients belonged to the FLN?'

'I don't know.'

'Why not?'

'I never asked.'

'Why not?'

'That is an important question,' Hassid said reflectively. 'As I conceive the duty of a doctor in his specific activities, it is to preserve life, to relieve pain and to restore his patients to full health. Nothing else. He has no duty—or even right—as a doctor to pass moral judgments. He must treat a man who has caught syphilis from a whore in a sailors' bar with the same compassion as he might a priest who caught it from a sacramental cup.'

Loirisier, an ex-legionary, interrupted.

'You mean—an FLN-er who has been wounded when he tried to kill a French mother deserves the same treatment as his victim?'

'As far as the doctor is concerned,' said Hassid, 'the answer must be "yes".'

Loirisier made an exclamation of disgust, and half-turned his back on Hassid.

'Yes,' said Hassid. 'The doctor must be morally neutral. He mustn't try and do the work of the policeman, the judge, the priest—of God himself . . . Consider what would happen if he did! He would allow every prejudice to affect his relationship with his patient. He would have to judge him before he treated him. He would have to arrogate to himself superhuman qualities of knowledge which no doctor possesses or could even claim.'

'So,' said Chatelain, 'if a member of the FLN and a patriotic Frenchman lay side by side in one of your hospitals, you would give them equal treatment?'

'Yes.'

'Irrespective of the *fellouze's* crimes?'

'Yes. I would resist my prejudices, and try to treat them equally.'

'I see,' said Chatelain, and wrote for a few moments in his journal.

'Now, tell me, Hassid, since we have established your

professional impartiality, how much money did you receive in payment from the FLN?’

Hassid straightened the whole of his bowed body, and when he did so he seemed to be only a little short of the six feet which had been his height in his youth.

‘Mr. President,’ he said firmly, ‘I have never taken money from the FLN or from any other political organization—never. On the contrary, some years ago two agents of the FLN called on me and attempted to extract a contribution for their funds.’

‘Did they threaten you?’

‘Yes.’

‘What happened?’

‘I sent them out of my flat.’

‘But it didn’t prevent you from giving evidence in the case of Djamila Mabrouk.’

‘No.’

‘You were paid for it.’

‘My professional fee.’

‘By the lawyers?’

‘Yes.’

‘You gave paid evidence for the FLN.’

Hassid shook his head.

‘You’ve forgotten, Mr. President. My evidence was that the marks on her body were not necessarily the result of torture by electrical cathodes. It was used by the Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry to give the *paras* a clean sheet. If I’d known then what I know now, I might have formed a different view.’

‘Let’s get back to the point you were making before,’ said Loirisier. ‘You spoke about being morally neutral. Does that apply to the doctor and politics?’

‘In his treatment of his patients, yes.’

‘And outside his hospital and consulting-rooms?’

‘No—a doctor is also a citizen. He has civic duties—he must take sides and form moral and political judgments of public affairs.’

'That's why, no doubt, you set up your organization with the barbarous title,' said Chatelain.

Hassid felt offended.

'I didn't think it such a bad title,' he said. 'I helped to compose it myself. It's a good mnemonic.'

'Well, you're not on trial for your literary talent. You are charged with being a traitor.'

Chatelain's half-smile faded as he read a note which a messenger had brought in. He passed it around the table, and said,

'I'm afraid we have only half an hour, Dr. Hassid.'

Vedoni rose, and said,

'I'll be brief. The man in front of us—Dr. Hassid—is a man for whom, in my time—not such a long one, of course—he looked around cockily—for whom I've had a great veneration. I'm sorry to be his accuser in the court today. He was my teacher, and if he never taught me very much, I must hold myself responsible in part.'

He preened himself, and put out his cigarette as if he was now coming to the serious part of his speech.

'I hope,' he said, 'the court will bear with me for just a few minutes if I state briefly my view of the organic nature of our society—'

'Briefly,' said Chatelain.

'—because it is central to the nature of Hassid's treachery . . . Society depends for its stability on the proper balance between its incorporated elements. It means that its developed components must have a greater weight than its under-developed components. It means, in short, that the representatives of our civilization must guide by their authority those whom history and a recessive civilization have brought to the present condition of the Algerian Moslems . . . That was the significance of the fraternization of the Forum. It recognized implicitly that what we needed here in French Algeria was a state in which every element would find a due place according to its function in the whole.'

'I think we'd better get on with the indictment,' said Chate-lain. 'There's no time for a lecture on the corporate state.'

'The charge against Hassid,' said Vedoni undeflected, 'is that he encouraged the secession of less-developed elements, that he accepted money for treating dissident Moslems, that he conspired with Si Cada to provide medical care for the enemies of the OAS, and finally—and this, Mr. President, is perhaps the gravest charge, he gave shelter, comfort and information to a *barbouze*, Robert du Pré, who, half an hour ago, put *Opération Straitjacket* into motion—with the object of destroying us all.'

He pointed to Hassid.

'I know this man. Whatever he says about medicine and morals, he has used his reputation in order to promote—objectively—the policies of the FLN. If the day ever came—God forbid!—when we see queues of refugee Frenchmen leaving the city their fathers built, when Frenchwomen cower into the gutter when Moslems pass, when French children are afraid to go to the schools where their mothers taught—if ever the day comes when the FLN flag flies over the Cathedral of Notre-Dame d'Afrique, and the altar is desecrated by a mob trying to make it a mosque for Islam—then I say, gentlemen, that this man—Hassid—will bear a greater responsibility than any single European in Algiers. I say this with regret.'

He frowned, and lowered his voice.

'Algiers is, in its way, a small city. My grandparents knew Dr. Hassid and esteemed him. My father thought less highly of him. But there is hardly a single family in Algiers which has been here for over fifty years which hasn't at some time or other had professional and social contact with him. And that'—his voice rose again—'that makes his crime the greater. He could have helped us; he chose to help the FLN. As a doctor with an international reputation, he could have made his voice heard abroad—in Paris, in London, in Washington. He chose to be silent.'

'For months the OAS was forbearing. His own prestige—the prestige of Colonel de Croissillon—was his protection. But we warned him. Don't let anyone say we didn't warn him. We sent him messages but he persisted. He thumbed his nose at us by forming his absurd PPPP. He openly consorted with *barbouzes*—especially the one who kidnapped and tortured Armidal. That, gentlemen, is the nature of his compassion, the extent of his impartiality, the measure of his humanity.

'While some of you were being hounded from one shelter to another, Hassid was giving his musical evenings in the Rue Michelet. While OAS men were being tormented in the Villa Rouchard, Hassid was drinking cognac with the torturer-in-chief. There's your humanitarian.

He loosened his collar, and said,

'We have condemned and executed others with less ceremony and for lesser offences. We could—perhaps we should—have found Hassid and du Pré together, and sent them to an eternal penance for what they did to Armidal—to others who've disappeared—and to French Algeria. But we've chosen to give him a fair trial. The future will say of us that in the heat of the battle we were still generous enough to give him what he and his friends denied to Armidal.

'Hassid, gentlemen, is our Eichmann.'

Vedoni's eyes hardened with malice.

'I ask you to give him an equivalent sentence.'

He sat down, and wiped his forehead with a handkerchief. In the afternoon heat, the room had become intolerably stuffy, and the President ordered one of the guards to open another window. With the stream of fresh air came the distant sound of the city—a sound of trains and ships' sirens piercing the endless creak of the cicadas in the garden.

Chatelain consulted Ohlman, and said to Hassid,

'You are entitled to a spokesman—a defending officer.'

'No,' said Hassid. 'I'll speak for myself.'

He felt a great weariness in his legs, and a longing to rest as

he was accustomed to do every afternoon. The name 'Armidal' which he had heard for the first time kept on coming back. It reminded him of almonds and glands, of a hypnotic which he sometimes prescribed and also of the synagogue and a long-forgotten prayer called the *Amidah*. And it seemed to him more interesting to pursue the association of the name than to improvise a speech in his own defence. What would Eliane think when she heard the news? Till then, he had rejected the thought of her from his mind. In the car, sitting between his abductors, he merely had the feeling that he was being taken by some strange and anxious visitors to see a critically ill patient. And when they arrived at the overgrown garden of the abandoned villa, the feeling had persisted. They had searched him, but not manacled him. He had difficulty in moving about without his glasses, and the gunman who had smashed them escorted him by the elbow, benevolently. He felt that they would bring him back as they had brought him here. But in the damp and shuttered vestibule, the unfamiliar men who addressed him with insolence reminded him of an episode in his childhood when he had been left at a new school by his mother. He was the youngest boy there, and when she went he had felt a total loneliness. And then in the break, about twenty bigger boys had converged around him, pressing him into a corner of the playground and jeering first at his name and then at his father's. And his loneliness was transformed into the desolation of terror.

Eliane, dear Eliane! He wanted to put on his Panama hat and go, because all his life he had loved no one, neither his wife nor his mother, as deeply as he loved his daughter. And seeing the sky behind the head of the President of the Court, he wanted to reach out from his trap through the hostile faces so that he could explain everything to her before he returned to his accusers—how he had been happy in Algiers before these disasters, how he had walked through the streets, a respected figure without fear, and had looked at the city with a proprie-

tary love, how he had already lived the fullness of his life, and how she should not think of him in grief. Hassid half-closed his eyes, and tried to bring the court into focus. It was a novel experience to be in the dock; he had never been accused of a more serious offence than parking his car in an unauthorized place . . . Vedoni—the prosecuting counsel. Vedoni—a youth who couldn't pass his elementary examinations—was demanding his life. It would have been more dignified to be shot in the back than to argue with a third-rate bully like him. But Armida! Armida! A new association came into his mind. *Armide*. Gluck's opera. A phrase of music formed in his thoughts and refused to go away. *Armide* the enchantress. *Armida* the tortured. *Armide* and *Armida*. What a name for a drama!

'Hassid!' said the President, and leaning forward Hassid could see the earnest, rather scholarly face of the Colonel. It was a face which he had known, although he and Chatelain had not met for many years. It had become familiar in connection with the Resistance, since Chatelain in Equatorial Africa had been one of the first to rally as a young lieutenant with de Larminat to de Gaulle. He had fought a gallant but despairing campaign in Indo-China. And when he had been posted to Algiers, he had arrived with the reputation of a liberal who had made a special study of psychology. It was he who had 'regularized' as he put it the conduct of the paratroopers after the Battle of Algiers. If now he was an OAS leader, it was almost an accident, a lack of flexibility in a proud mind which regarded it as ignoble to abandon a moral and intellectual position as it would have been to surrender a physical stronghold. His fellow-officers, some who had been most violent in their hostility to de Gaulle after the Colonels' Revolt, had come to feel like chastened hounds. Chatelain had been isolated, too slow to conform, too arrogant to submit, smarting above all from a personal rebuke which the head of the State had given him in front of some junior officers during his quick visit

to Algiers. Hassid looked from him to the ex-legionary with the clipped red hair and the battered moustache who stood guard, wearing a zip-up jacket, at his side, and thought that Chatelain no longer seemed a fallen proconsul; he had the air of an absconding college bursar who has fallen into bad company.

'Well, Hassid,' said Chatelain impatiently. His voice had risen a few notes, and he looked towards the door as if to ensure that he knew where the exit was, almost like a claustrophobic theatre-goer who has become oppressed by the play.

'I have little to say,' said Hassid. 'But, if you will hear me, I'll say it.'

He cleared his throat, tantalized by the bottle of mineral water in front of the judges.

'I am now an old man,' he began. 'I am sixty-seven. I have no concern to say anything but the truth—to you or to anyone else who may one day be interested in what has been said and may be done today. I have seen death many times in my life—as a soldier and as a doctor. I first saw it fighting for France in the 1914 war. When I was wounded at Mourmelon-le-Grand, I lay in a shell-hole for hours with only the dead as my companions. And in my life as a doctor, I have seen many men and women die.'

'So you see'—he raised his head and looked straight in front of him—'I am acquainted with death. My work is almost all behind me. My only regret is for those who may mourn me.'

'But you, Vedoni'—he turned to him—'you're something different. You are a young man. You've known nothing of life. So far you've dedicated your youth to death. The time will come when you may be sorry for those wasted years.'

'Get on with it,' said Vedoni. He was smoking again, and while Hassid was speaking had ostentatiously engaged in conversation with Loirisier.

'I don't think you will ever be a doctor . . . You will never pass the qualifying examinations.'

The judges laughed, and Vedoni said, smiling with his teeth clenched,

'You won't have to mark my papers. I've marked yours.'

'But I won't dwell on that,' Hassid went on serenely, satisfied that in his long experience of mutual baiting with Vedoni, the laughter had been on his side. 'Let me deal with the charges.'

His tone changed, and he frowned, a deep line forming vertically between his heavy eyebrows.

'If I'm accused of carrying out my duties as a doctor—of trying to heal whoever came to me, irrespective of their origin, then I must accept the charge . . . Yes—I have treated Arabs, Kabyls, Negroes, Frenchmen, Spaniards, Jews—everyone who came to me or was brought to me or I went to see. You say that some of the Moslems were members of the FLN? That may be. I never asked nor sought to know. I treated them because they were suffering men and women. I make no apology. I have no regrets . . . Now, what is the next charge?'

'You are charged,' said Chatelain, 'with acting as a liaison officer with Si Cada, the head of the FLN medical office.'

Hassid pondered for a few moments, and said,

'As for that, I can only say it's untrue.'

'Bring Dr. Lecret in,' Chatelain ordered.

While they waited for the witness to enter, Hassid shut his eyes and rested them. When he opened them again, Lecret was standing behind a chair, an arm's length away from him, carefully dressed as if for a formal reception, the neatly folded handkerchief in his breast-pocket contrasting strangely with the informality of Vedoni's loosened tie.

'Do you know this man?' Vedoni asked without rising.

'Yes. He is Dr. Hassid.'

Lecret spoke without glancing at his old colleague.

'Did you know Si Cada?'

'Yes . . . He was head of the FLN medical service.'

'Did these two consort?'

'Yes.'

'Thank you.'

'Is that all?'

'Yes.'

Lecret bowed to Chatelain, who returned his greeting curtly, and still without looking at Hassid, hurried with his head lowered through the door.

'You have established,' said Hassid, 'that I consorted with Si Cada. That is true. He was a friend and a colleague. We often acted in consultation when treating patients. That is true . . . And it's true—I've no wish to deny it—that after the explosion at the Café de la Victoire, I helped to treat some Moslems who were injured.'

'Did you treat any Europeans?'

'No—they were otherwise cared for . . . But the Moslems were afraid to be taken to our hospitals. And isn't that a reproach to our civilization'—Hassid angrily struck the chair in front of him—'to you who are its representatives—isn't it a reproach that these "undeveloped" Moslems were afraid to enter a hospital founded on charity—the Christian charity which you claim to be defending?'

'But I will say this now, as I couldn't say it to them. They were right to be afraid. They were right not to throw themselves on the mercy of people like you who have pursued wounded men into hospitals and killed them in their beds—who've followed ambulances and killed the dying on their stretchers.'

There was a mutter of anger from the OAS men along the walls, and Vedoni rose to his feet.

'Do we have to hear any more of this stuff, Mr. President?'

'Yes,' said Chatelain. 'Let's hear him out.'

'I won't detain you much longer,' said Hassid, his voice becoming hoarse. 'You have accused me of treason to France . . . Those very words must be painful to a man who shed his blood, who would have given his own life and gave, alas, his son's, for his country. But treason is a word with a subjective

significance. Was it treason when I and my friends helped the Allied landings in 1943? Would you have thought so then, Mr. President? I think not, because you too had already been charged, condemned and sentenced in your absence by Vichy for treason.'

'I am today under sentence of death *in absentia* by de Gaulle,' said Chatelain.

'And that is precisely the point,' said Hassid. 'There is a consensus of opinion in society which agrees on the constitution of a State or acquiesces even under protest in its existence. And yet the time may come when revolt is a moral duty. At that stage, we each must take a bearing on our true north. What is the legitimate State? Is it the Fourth Republic, Vichy, the Fifth Republic? Who are the legitimists and who are the usurpers? If each of us were to demand an ideal State of our own making, it would be anarchy. And so we must compromise. We must accept the State most tolerable to our ideals.'

'And what sort of State is that, Hassid?' Chatelain asked ironically.

'It is a State which respects the rights of human personality. It is one in which the law permits men to have compassion for each other. It is one in which fratricidal hatred and violence is replaced by brotherly love and co-operation.'

'And is that how you see de Gaulle's Republic?'

'Oh, no—not yet. France has been infected by the Nazi occupation. But it has great strength—a great purity which will one day wholly overcome the corruption which has seized it. The France of Bossuet and Voltaire and Rousseau and Michelet and Hugo and the clergy who sheltered the Gestapo's victims and protested against torture in our day—that, I believe, is the real France which is still groping for institutions.'

'And the Villa Rouchard?' Colonel Loirisier asked. 'What about your friend the *barbouze*?'

'I know nothing of that,' said Hassid, shaking his head

slowly. 'Nothing . . . But if du Pré is, in fact, in the service of the Security Forces, then I believe there is nothing that he would do which would be contrary to his own high standards.'

'Like torturing a young law student?' Vedoni interrupted.

'I don't know,' said Hassid. 'I wouldn't believe du Pré would lend himself to that . . . There's been too much of it . . . In the Battle of Algiers honest young officers were perverted by the orders of their seniors . . .'

'Long before that,' said Chatelain. 'But what of it? If at the time of the landings a captured Vichy naval officer had held the plans of the minefields outside Sidi-Ferruch, would you have tortured him, Hassid—to enable the troop-carriers to go in—to save five thousand lives?'

Hassid was silent.

'Would you?' Chatelain insisted.

'Perhaps,' said Hassid, 'perhaps I would have been weak enough to do so. Perhaps. But a State must be judged not by the weakness of individual beings but by the standards it has to serve.'

'It's the hypocrisy of our age.'

'No,' said Hassid firmly. 'It's the difference between Himmler and Landru.'

A motor-cycle drew up noisily outside the window, and the judges and guards turned their heads to see who had arrived.

Hassid continued,

'In my youth, we still believed that mankind progressed. In my later life, I have seen civilized men murder each other with a savagery and mercilessness which the darkest ages of history could never equal. I've seen men slaughter each other in Algiers for the highest motives. Like the Crusaders and the warriors of the Jihad, they prayed before they killed. Whatever may happen to me now—'

The door was flung open, and a rain-soaked dispatch-rider who gave off a smell of steaming leather hurried in with a message for Colonel Chatelain. He read it calmly and said,

'Gentlemen, I'm afraid we'll have to adjourn. The situation at the moment is that "Sunset" is going according to plan, but they've also put "Straitjacket" into operation—and with radio silence. They've captured Colonel Tillant, and are making a large-scale search of El Biar. The road-block at Ben Aknoun won't be open till six o'clock. We will disperse in the general direction of Affreville, with a rendezvous point at Bou-Medfa.'

'There is something else I want to say,' Hassid insisted, but the members of the court were already pushing their chairs back noisily, and gathering up their papers.

From the overgrown drive came the sound of engines revving up, and Hassid took up his hat from the chair in front of him, waiting for the departure orders.

Chatelain led the way to the door with Vedoni following close behind.

'Take care of the old man,' Vedoni called to the red-haired guard. The guard jumped to attention.

'What now?' said Hassid, putting his hat on his head.

The guard didn't answer. The same squad as the one which had brought Hassid to the villa re-formed around him while the cars in the drive started off.

'Where would you like to go?' asked their leader.

Hassid looked around at them. They were all young men who might have been clerks or shop assistants in the city. They returned his glance without hostility.

'I think—where are we?'

'Near Ben Aknoun.'

'Perhaps I could go to my clinic at Bel Air and get my glasses—I've a spare pair—and I'd also like to see my patients.'

'We'd thought of that,' said the leader. 'We'll see if it's possible.'

'Perhaps I could have a drink.'

'Of course.'

He walked with an easy stride to the table, and poured out a glass of mineral water which he handed to Hassid.

• 'I am leaving, Father,' said du Pré.

'Is there anything I can do for you?' asked the priest.

Du Pré looked around him at the vaulting Cathedral and said,

'Yes, Father. Say a mass for the soul of David Hassid.' Then he went to a side altar and lit a candle.

Outside the Cathedral, Vinh woke with a shudder when du Pré slammed the door.

'Where now?' asked Vinh.

'To Affreville,' du Pré answered.

'And then?'

'To Oran.'

As they drove along the ramps they saw a group of firemen with a military guard who were still damping down the fire in the timber warehouse at the docks. Every now and again the red-hot roof rippled into flame.

'Fifty days to independence,' said Vinh, accelerating.

Looking back from the heights of El Biar, they could see the glow over the warehouse lighting the sky like a bogus dawn.